ART'S INTERVENTION:

ACTIVATING CULTURAL MEMORY FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

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Abstract

This dissertation develops a socialist feminist aesthetic theory that brings an intersectional and anti-capitalist analysis of aesthetics to art criticism, museum studies and cultural policy. It begins by positing the social value of the arts in terms of their relationship to social change, which is catalyzed by cultural memory. This argument proceeds by developing the concept of cultural memory through keystone texts in aesthetic theory, which it redeploys to explain how cultural memory operates through the arts. The dissertation then outlines a socialist feminist politics that distinguishes cultural memory from discourse and explains the mutual impact of discursive and material conditions through the mechanism of cultural memory.

This theoretical construct is applied to a case study of Charlotte Salomon's massive and multidisciplinary *Life? or Theatre?*. The case study attends to the socialist feminist dimension of the work, which has otherwise been underrepresented. The dissertation further applies a socialist feminist theory of art as cultural memory to its analysis of problems in the work's exhibition at the Art Galley of Toronto in 2000. This analysis reveals the ways in which the work's political content was circumscribed by the exhibition. It also explores the political and economic climate of patriarchal capitalism impinging on the gallery to describe how this circumscription was preconditioned. By developing the concept of cultural memory in this way, the dissertation makes a contribution to the study of Salomon's work, as well as debates on art's social value and political effects, feminist art history, and the sociology of art.

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Introduction

This dissertation challenges the premise that art exists for the purpose of decoration, distraction, and distinction, to nurture a mood within a particular place or person, or to gratify an urge toward self-expression by individuals of a peculiar disposition. Prime Minister Stephen Harper expressed these ideas when he made the following remarks after cutting $45 million from arts and culture funding: "I think when ordinary working people come home, turn on the TV and see a gala of a bunch of people at, you know, a rich gala all subsidized by taxpayers claiming their subsidies aren't high enough, when they know those subsidies have actually gone up – I'm not sure that's something that resonates with ordinary people" (Toronto Star). The country's foremost representative was articulating a popular perspective among Canadians—one that views the arts as a realm of privilege and little collective relevance. Indeed, the Harper campaign saw its highest polling numbers the day after he made what has been dubbed his "Ordinary People Don't Care About the Arts statement" (Wheeler), suggesting that many Canadians regard artistic practice as frivolous and private, rendering marginal value to society at-large except when, as a commodity of decoration, distraction, and distinction, it can produce consumer value. It does so either by generating cultural capital through the sheer aura of originality or by connecting consumers to capital generating corporations, thereby fueling a local, regional, national or global economic system. This is why lucrative cultural industries

exist within Canada, as does an affluent but extremely narrow art market. Even so the average artist lives below the poverty line. There remains within the population of Canada at least a residual understanding that some human activity is not market durable yet might merit communal support for the sake of enrichment and innovation, otherwise known broadly speaking as the public good. For this reason, the arts have long been supported by private and public donors in this country, despite a pervasive attitude of indifference and occasionally disdain.

This is the popular profile of the arts in Canada at the time of writing. This is the profile by which artists and artworks of every ilk and character are to be recognized in every branch of mass media, as well as perhaps in most classrooms and living rooms. It is a profile reflected in the ghettoization of arts education into underfunded, academic sub-disciplines. It is evident in the well-publicized need of cultural institutions to continuously pursue another blockbuster event or architectural makeover. The names and faces of our artists never appear on our currency or on our public infrastructure, as they do in other countries (Leger). Rather, the arts are the first budget line to be cut at every level of government—despite being one of Canada's largest employers and most efficient investments, suggesting that even a market-based justification for arts funding often goes unrecognized. While the cultural sector receives 1% of total government funding, it employs 600,000 nationwide and contributes $45 billion to our GDP (Statistics Canada), yet the topic of cultural policy remains virtually unmentionable throughout elections.

A widespread failure to comprehend the multivalent capacity of art, beyond hobby or commodity, is evident across cultural sectors, and is core to the manifold problems surrounding artistic production, presentation and reception. It is well understood that the making, study, valuation, display, and interpretation of art are utterly and indelibly flawed undertakings, alternately wrestled and discarded within the realm of public policy as humanist interest expands and contracts around an extra-market phenomenon that can not be reduced to means ends rationality; policy wrestles with attempts to quantify the unquantifiable. Hence, the assumption of a starving artist, despite its implicit violence, has long been as acceptable and iconic as that of the more novel media mogul. Surely, there is the belief underlying this condition that artists are inherently flawed, misguided and possibly degenerate enigmas, at best passively inspiring risk-takers, and therefore reside rather fairly at the mercy of life's vagaries[1]. Yet we know that none of this is true. We know, through the simple practice of reason and observation, that no fewer degenerates or geniuses dominate other professional domains, yet this special "artistic" nature stands to explain (or denigrate) the status of the artist. The nature of the artist as resented enigma, is a reflection of the role that artists play both inside and outside of the capitalist market system, and is a problem in social relations that informs this dissertation.

[1] Richard Florida's work on the creative class does not help to improve this perception of the artist since, in his terms, the "creative class" represents competitive, information technology elites, and "creativity" refers to any source of symbolic capital that this class can consume.

Despite these problems in the social status of art, human beings are consistently drawn to the sensorial endeavors that make themselves at home in the world of the "artistic". We know ourselves to be moved by a novel, or an album; we know our comrades and our countries to be galvanized by the language of artists; time and again we associate the dawning of a new age with the developments, whether prefiguring or articulating, of artistic movements; we define our historical epochs by these very phases of the moon. In the contemporary era, whenever we seek to change or affix hearts and minds we still rely essentially on the artists' tools of rhetoric, symbol, sound, movement, and imagery. We know there is something at play, but we act as though it were not so. Or perhaps we have trouble remembering. Many of us seek out the arts as a means of healing social rifts—from memorial marches to monuments, from documentaries to documenta, from murals to musical anthems. Art therapy writ-large persists as a potential tool of subversion, an alternative to what is, while little is articulated or understood about its efficacy as such. Even as the politicization of art waxes and wanes, there remain few attempts to conceive of the juncture between art and politics.

My research into the social value of art stems from these contradictory conditions. I propose that a more workable understanding of art's value must be recollected from the philosophy and sociology of art, consolidated and developed, to guide our evolving cultural consciousness, our personal receptivity to the arts, and our structural deployment of them. I assert that our capacity for critical engagement and

constructive public policy depends on an evolution in the way we think, practice, and communicate about the arts, and the politics we bring to them. For this reason, I intend to establish here a socialist feminist theory of art as cultural memory, to shift our understanding of artistic activity and the cultural sector.

Defining "Art"

To what do I refer when I use the word "art"? I am thinking about the fine and performing arts across disciplines, but art itself is a contested term. The aesthetic dimension is key to any definition of art, in so far as the arts tend to engage or access sensory modes of perception to convey meaning. However, that can equally be said of many things—from affection to abuse—rendering it a necessary but insufficient component of any definition. Art remains essentially a social category, the contents of which shift and evolve according to specific historical circumstances.

Historian Larry Shiner makes the case that the Eurocentric delineation between the fine and popular arts solidified during the 18th century in relation to an emerging market economy and middle class art public (Shiner 7). Within the past 60 years, the institutional assimilation of genres, media and materials previously belonging to other social categories—such as popular culture, craft, and technology—has broadened the category of art, demonstrating the permeability of its borders and the power of institutional gate keepers, without actually overcoming the established divide: the

setting off of art as a luxury commodity segregated from the rest of society (Shiner 269). Nonetheless, this urge toward the unification of art and life has rendered it commonplace for people to declare that anything can be art. Note for instance this October 2001 headline from the UK's Telegraph newspaper: "Anyone's an Artist, Anything Can be Art"[2], which explores the legacy of Dadaism's efforts to democratize the arts. Similarly, Arthur Danto's book *After the End of Art* reflects on how contemporary art has escaped definitional grand narratives. Shiner establishes that this not just a contemporary phenomenon since for two thousand years preceding the 18th century the term "art" applied to "any human activity performed with skill and grace" (Shiner 5). But he also points to a persistent polarity underlying our current art system[3], a duality of genius versus skill, mind versus body, which distinguishes contemporary attitudes about art from those of the previous era. He is referring to the separation of fine art from craft and the popular arts, a separation between refined (aesthetic) and ordinary (functional) pleasure (Shiner 6) that resulted from "the replacement of patronage by an art market and a middle-class art public" (Shiner 7). Shiner explains that "frustration" with these economic conditions led eighteenth-century German writers to create the elevated category of the "aesthetic" (Shiner 7) to sustain market

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[2] http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/4726169/Everyones-an-artist-anything-can-be-art.html Accessed February 20, 2012.

[3] Shiner uses the term "art system" to reference "various art worlds and subworlds of literature, music, dance, theatre, film and visual arts. Art worlds are networks of artists, critics, audiences, and others who share a common field of interest along with a commitment to certain values, practices, and institutions. An art system embraces the underlying concepts and ideals shared by various art worlds and by the culture at large, including those who only participate marginally in one of the art worlds." (Shiner 11)

autonomy. This elevation produced a hierarchy between artists and labourers/craftsmen. Furthermore, those genres chosen for elevation reflected existing social hierarchies, reinforcing dualisms of gender, race and class (Shiner 7). The maintenance of this hierarchy, even as the commodification of art has extended its reach into "high" art, has further served to alienate people from the arts.

I concur with Shiner that a new art system must emerge to straddle such polarities. This is why I aim to develop here an understanding of the arts as the terrain of cultural memory through which such polarities might be overcome. Cultural memory is a quality of art that renders it valuable in processes of social change. It moves our valuation of art away from the dichotomy of aesthetic and functional pleasure, away from commodity and class value. A cultural memory approach to art, which I explore below, grounds the very broad category of art in the social world without compromising art's autonomy by dictating the definitional parameters of art. Likewise, debates concerning the definition of art ultimately do not affect the content or usefulness of the concept of cultural memory. The concept of cultural memory can help us understand whatever we define as art, and perhaps can be the conceptual bridge on which a new art system depends.

Defining "Cultural Memory"

One might ask why I am using the term "cultural memory" instead of "culture" to identify the social value of art. Cultural memory reflects the dependence of culture

on memory processes. Culture is not something that just is; it is created through processes extended in time and space because it is based on experience, which is both historical and experiential; in other words, it is based on a synergy of accumulated knowledge and embodied or lived exposure to the sensuous world. Culture is passed on or inherited through memory and it is filtered through amnesiac processes, which shape and focus it. So in a sense, culture (i.e. pervasive values and practices) is really a reflection or instantiation of cultural memory. However, in this project I am interested specifically in the arts as cultural media and I am asking us to look at them as memory making mechanisms. So when I discuss the arts as cultural memory I am using the word "culture" in reference to artifacts or symbolic resources (i.e. the arts), that are media of collective memory with cultural (in the original sense) significance.[4]

The concept of cultural memory is a useful means of perceiving the social and political dimension of art primarily because it reveals art's dialectical nature. If cultural memory is the propagation of collective memory through cultural signs, it is dialectical because collective memory and cultural signs are never static, especially as the subject of political activity; rather, they are the terrain over which ideologies battle to establish their legitimacy and history within the memory of a community.

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[4] I am essentially adopting Raymond Williams' popular and dialectical definition of culture, which points to its manifestation in concrete artefacts and abstract processes. Williams provided three, closely related definitions: "(i)... a general process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development.... (ii)... a particular way of life, whether of a people, a period, a group, or humanity in general....(iii)... the works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity." I am employing sense (ii) and (iii) here to explain how culture as described in sense (i) is dialectically achieved and to introduce the role of memory in this process.

While it is important to recognize that the cultural signification underlying cultural memory extends beyond the fine and performing arts (for instance, political and familial discourses are not self-consciously artistic but are agents of cultural memory), such an ideological struggle is explicitly engaged by artistic practices, which may in turn be determinant of other cultural memory sites (Edelman). In so far as cultural memory is also a value in other things or categories, such as food and education, it serves to enlighten us on the function and value of those, rather than to lessen the usefulness of the concept as a means of valuing art. So while cultural memory is not exclusive to the arts, the concept is no less a revealing means of understanding them. In chapter 2, I will examine the ways in which others have defined "cultural memory" and I will develop its definition through a reading of aesthetic theory, which suggests both what cultural memory is and how it relates to the potential for art to catalyze social change.

Theoretical Stance

This dissertation takes a self-consciously socialist feminist standpoint to elucidate cultural memory's application to the field of art as a specific site of ideological struggle. The political dimension of cultural memory is manufactured, framed, and perpetuated by ideological actors. As an ideological actor, I wish to make the case that a socialist feminist purview should be brought to bear on the production and evaluation of cultural memory. A socialist feminist aesthetic theory analyzes

artistic production as a product and producer of cultural memory, in relation to its political and economic context. It brings an anti-oppression analysis and critique of capitalism to the interpretation of a work and its reception. It questions the ideological content of the cultural memory process under examination, given the power dynamics surrounding and constructing the arts as a social activity, as labour, experience and discourse.

This theoretical approach is oriented toward social change in favour of anti-capitalist, intersectional, feminist values. Ultimately the change I seek through this theoretical lens is ideological and material, (depending on social movements as much as philosophy) within the base and superstructure of Canadian society, and must be achieved dialectically through the methodology of praxis.

Praxis has long been associated with the unique behavior of humanity, which Kant conveyed as the union of pure and practical reason. Successive philosophers (e.g. Marx, the Frankfurt School, feminism) added a uniquely ethical dimension to praxis, seeking it out as the source of truth (in Hegel's terms, "absolute spirit"), the remedy for false consciousness, and the source of emancipation.

The question of praxis from a Marxist perspective has historically focused on the nature of social consciousness and its relation to social action (especially labour), realized with the aid of theory, and manifest in political organization. The failure of political organization, and the limited success of social change in general, led Lukacs, Gramsci, and later the Frankfurt School to highlight the force of ideological structures

and the potential of anti-hegemonic forces. Further, the Frankfurt School examined the structures of communication (e.g. the culture industry) as sites for praxis, and feminists extended praxis to language itself as an ideological actor (e.g. patriarchal speech). Thus, socialist feminism as a theoretical perspective embracing praxis, has come to view all cultural artefacts as political, and cultural production as the (re)creation of social life, born from a convergence of the theoretical and the practical.

To explain the historical trajectory of socialist feminism would require a dissertation in itself. Of fundamental importance to this tradition is a combined critique of capitalism and an intersectional analysis of power and oppression, which I outline in chapter 3. In that chapter I will also develop the tenets of socialist feminist aesthetic theory by bringing together Marxist and feminist analyses of aesthetics.

My project builds on this dialectical tradition; it would ideally manifest in the forefronting of a socialist feminist framework within curatorial practice and cultural policy, to encourage counter-hegemonic memory making.

Method

To triangulate the too often segregated studies of cultural memory, art, and politics, I will engage in two methodological movements: first, I will attempt a detailed and dialectical literature review concerning art's social value, cultural memory, and

socialist feminist theory.[5] Out of this dialectical exchange between and across literatures I will articulate a politically engaged and developed understanding of cultural memory as a means of understanding art's social value, thus generating a socialist feminist aesthetic theory otherwise unavailable.

When we talk about the political and art, we tend to think about political art, rather than the political in art. I am not explicitly or exclusively addressing avant-garde art, or art in the service of social movements. I intend to apply very broadly the arguments I am making about the cultural memory capacity of art and the relationship of art to social change, because I cannot conceive of a work of art that does not carry an ideological, and therefore political, dimension, be it progressive, conservative, complacent, or regressive. Consequently, I am interested in analyzing the arts, as well as the conditions of their production and reception, from a specifically ideological standpoint—socialist feminism—as chapter 3 will explain in great detail.

My second methodological movement will engage in a detailed case study, using the theoretical construct described above to analyze Charlotte Salomon's multi-disciplinary work *Life? or Theatre?* By examining its form, content, curation, critical reception, and theoretical implications, I will elucidate the counter cultural capacity of

[5] I rely on western theoretical traditions because of what is available in English translation, and because it forms the basis of Canadian curriculum and public discourse. This does not preclude understanding aesthetics as cultural memory from another vantage point, and comparison would be revealing. My interest in anti-oppression politics specifically is drawn primarily from Marxist and feminist theory rather than other forms of anti-oppression literature because these easily facilitate commentary on intersectional frameworks of oppression and aesthetics.

the work, (which I will frame as a memory-based project) and the extent to which its feminist content is under-realized by the touring edition.

Building on this case study as a heuristic tool, I will also consult museum and cultural policy studies to demonstrate how the structural conditions of cultural production can render such work ideologically hegemonic or transformative.

The breakdown of chapters follows this methodological outline quite closely. Chapter 1 reviews aesthetic and social theory to consolidate our current understanding of art's social value, especially its role in social change. This consolidation also lays the groundwork for the construction of a socialist feminist aesthetic theory. The chapter begins by reviewing existing arguments on behalf of art's ideological and political influence. It mobilizes these arguments to conclude that the social value of the arts can be found in their capacity to influence social change. The chapter then explores the role of subjectivity in social change and how aesthetics engage subjectivity. This leads to me toward the concept of cultural memory, a mode of engagement between the arts and the subject that facilitates the subject's action.

Chapter 2 surveys the use and meaning of the term "cultural memory". This allows me to establish that memory is a reoccurring if understudied theme in social and aesthetic theory, which suggests that it resonates with many theorists as an important means of understanding social and cultural life. I then examine central arguments from aesthetic theory concerning art's value and I reconceptualize these arguments as explanations of art's mnemonic dimension. I am therefore able to develop a

multifaceted definition of cultural memory that explains how it is present in the arts. The arguments from aesthetic theory also enable us to understand the dialectics of art. Consequently, I argue that all dialectical struggles within art are essentially the struggle of cultural memory, which clarifies the role of art in dialectical social development.

In chapter 3 I argue that a socialist feminist politics is a necessary framework for our analysis of cultural memory. It offers direction to social development. I begin by defining socialist feminism and explaining its political content. I then describe the relationship between cultural memory and the project of socialist-feminism, which makes them relevant to one another. This association leads me to argue that cultural memory should be conceived of as distinct from discourse, if cultural memory is perceived through a socialist-feminist lens. In fact, cultural memory creates a connection between discourse and material reality. This explains how the arts intervene in the world.

Chapter 4 demonstrates the impact of a socialist-feminist aesthetic theory of art as cultural memory on a reading of Salomon's unique, multidisciplinary and extensive body of art. It does so by identifying the intersectional politics evident in the form and content of *Life? or Theatre?*. It then proceeds to consider how its politics were compromised in a particular exhibition, and the kind of cultural memory that was thereby encouraged from and through the work. This analysis aims to highlight an under-valued dimension of *Life? or Theatre?* While the intersectional critique I mobilize here is not unique, its application to this exhibition is so. Critics to date have

focused on *Life? or Theatre?* as life-writing, and have noted some of its feminist content, but none have observed the ways in which that content is managed by the exhibition and the political consequences.

Finally, chapter 5 demonstrates the impact of a socialist feminist aesthetic theory on the analysis of Salomon's exhibition context, suggesting how this theoretical model might critique and inform cultural economics. Here I argue that the conditions of production impinging on arts institutions affect the cultural memory impact of the arts. At this level, I am calling for a more ethical approach to curatorial practice and cultural policy, which is informed by my case study and by a politically engaged concept of art as cultural memory in the service of social change.

This project aims to alter our perspective on the arts so that we might better access its potential to aid us in establishing a more just and sustainable society. It seeks to remember that neglected aesthetic value, so material to our collective resources as agents of memory and social action. It proceeds now, with an attempt to describe that very resource, in all its manifestations.

Chapter 1: Art's Social Value

> Together, art, the mind, and the situations in which they are applied construct and transform beliefs about the social world, defining problems and solutions, hopes and fears, the past, the present, and the future. (Edelman 5)

This dissertation sets out to renegotiate our relationship with the arts, to forge the basis of new social contract, which is time and again called for by artists, administrators, patrons, politicians and academics. It aims to inform a general public that is never sure how to take a position in relation to the arts without dismissing them. I take for granted that the assumption of an abstract social good associated with art will not suffice. There is a dirth of clarity and discussion on this matter, which undermines arts advocacy. While the seeker can find much material in aesthetic theory regarding the relevance of art to social development, such ideas have rarely taken center stage in any depth or detail within the public sphere, and few texts address the subject with explicit, explanatory intention. This chapter will attempt to compensate for that absence by refocusing attention on an under-utilized language, literature, and quality of thought concerning art's social value, to demonstrate and detail its political potential. My argument will proceed by positioning the arts as ideologically viral. They offer models for political organization and upheaval, and thereby reveal the malleability of

political conditions. I will then argue that the manipulation of politics, and of artistic materials, is necessary to the cultivation of humanity, which is necessary to its survival. I will offer evidence of art's role in galvanizing social activism to further this claim. Then I will look at the subject of social change, to explore how consciousness relates to action and how art relates to consciousness, to substantiate my argument that the arts can catalyze social action. Finally, I will begin to indicate how feminist art and cultural memory relate to one another, and how cultural memory relates to consciousness, in preparation for the following chapters where I develop a socialist feminist aesthetic theory of art as cultural memory that capitalizes on art's social value. My overview of this research leads me to argue here that the social value of the arts is primarily grounded in its capacity to generate social change.

We begin to see this interpretation of art in recent sociological discourse. In his introduction to a special issue of the Canadian Journal of Communication, Dick Stanley summarizes the social effects of the arts documented therein by using the term "cultural citizenship".[6] It is his finding[7] that the arts facilitate "appropriation of cultural content into the public life" of individuals, thereby improving their capacity to participate in civic society (Stanley 8). The arts can do this by legitimizing our values and social networks (whatever they are), infusing us with the confidence to act on them; they can also question and disrupt our beliefs and identities by habitually exposing us to new ideas while connecting us with others who are "similarly exposed" and thus able to

[6] Stanley p. 8, borrowing the term from Andrew & Gattinger
[7] Stanley is relating the results of a collaborative research program, the Initiative to Study the Social Effects of Culture.

collaboratively analyse and synthesize ideas with us (Stanley 10). Essentially, Stanley's analysis renders the social value of art synonymous with its capacity to facilitate cognitive development and cooperation among citizens—basic skills that enable social action.

Similarly, Murray Edelman's *From Art to Politics* explicitly addresses art's social value in terms of its transformative ideological force. He illuminates art's political capacity by arguing that it substantiates and disseminates ideas, which spread virally, gaining momentum "through discourse, paraphrases, imitations, and emulation, and through attacks on them as well. Their key political consequence is to focus attention, fundamental assumptions, and ideology" (Edelman 11). This viral theory of art is consistent with critical discourse analysis and meme theory, as well as more traditional understandings of the arts as found in aesthetic philosophy. All of these theoretical approaches have long provided comparable means of understanding the power of art to influence minds.

Reception theorists such as Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay have raised the matter of subjective agency to question arts' influence, and they have demonstrated the power of audiences to create unintended meanings and interpretations. Given the complexity of subjectivity, it would be easy to doubt the influence of the arts on the formation of ideas, since individuals navigate multiple positions of experience and identity from which they interpret and act on the world and are therefore not easily or consistently determined by ideological prescriptions as contending social locations influence their

mode of reception. However, Richard Sandell's study of audience engagement with exhibitions concludes that "despite the variability and unpredictability that has often been found in audience responses to various media, there is nevertheless both theoretical support and empirical evidence to suggest a degree of influence on the part of cultural producers" (Sandell 15). In other words, it seems that there is some actual communication between objects and people, and that intended messages are consistently, if not always or completely, conveyed (Sandell 15). Moreover, Sandell finds that artistic influence "extends beyond the confines of individual exhibition spaces, leaking out through a variety of ways including media reporting, promotional communications and the ongoing social interactions of visitors" (Sandell 176 citing Kratz).[8] Sandell's study provides further empirical evidence to support Edelman and Stanley's conclusion that the arts are an effective medium for the dissemination of ideas shaping civic engagement.

Edelman and others argue that art is particularly effective in this regard because it accesses and examines private, emotional responses (Edelman 53, Adams, Bennett). Even artwork concerned primarily with private experience "can carry strong political associations: the message, for example, that politics is a relatively trivial concern most of the time, or that it can be an unfortunate intrusion on what people want to do with their lives" (Edelman 50). Such work is political in the sense that it encourages disengagement. As Adorno has argued, it is this simultaneous autonomy and non-

[8] Further unpacking of the connection between art, consciousness and social action will proceed later in this chapter.

autonomy from social life, that renders art "the social antithesis of society" (Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* 8). Indeed, ideas are intrinsically political, even when attempting to be explicitly anti-political, because they influence social thought and behaviour. Ultimately, privately held conceptions established by art influence not only the social terrain generally (on which the efficacy of any social change project depends) but the very processes of political organization in so far as those revolve around socially inherited notions of authority and subordination, the perception of issues, and emotional investments in them.

I am compelled to make this argument (drawing on Edelman, Stanley and Sandell) that the arts, other than that which is typically recognized as political, are inherently political although they are commonly disassociated from politics by dominant modes of pedagogy and display that reflect a capitalist economy which sequesters and depoliticizes all activity. This disassociation renders our understanding of art's political dimension very vague. When arts politics are acknowledged, it is typically with distaste for the category of propaganda. But without developing a careful and thorough understanding of art's political dimension we cannot begin to adequately conceptualize, let alone promote, its social value.

We also fail to fully understand fundamental aspects of political events when we lack a political analysis of the arts. For instance, we overlook how the manifestation of social upheaval responds to the dictates of art. As Edelman explains, "rioting is neither spontaneous nor automatic, but a response to a dramatic script that has often provided

one scenario out of many that might be followed in such a situation: personal despair; revenge on the jurors and police; political action to change the criminal justice system radically..." (Edelman 8). The practice of popular theatre relies on this tendency of the arts, as media of communication, to articulate forgotten or suppressed political impulses and strategies. As we learn from Augusto Boal, "performances are... rehearsals for revolution (Boal 141) that 'having rehearsed a resistance to oppression will prepare [participants] to resist effectively in a future reality, when the occasion presents itself once more' (Boal 150)" (Kistenberg 178). Such an understanding of politics—that it is fundamentally scripted by art—reveals the inherent malleability of politics. In so far as art coalesces and conveys disparate perceptions, it also reminds us of the dialectical, of the mutually determinant relation of subjective and objective (Edelman 66) that renders any political moment transitory and subject to upheaval. This is not to argue that politics are merely performances, but that both are human constructs, susceptible to creative action.

Art is not only a means of altering the conditions of one's existence through the imagination of difference or the representation of action; it is also a means of survival and the fulfillment of phylogeny. This existential aspect should not be overlooked. As philosopher Karl Lowith explains, "every artificial elaboration is as natural to man [sic] as the automatic processes of organic life. For he is not able to live as a human being without cultivating his environment and in doing so cultivating himself" (Lowith 60). Every living being must by necessity impact and alter its environment to some degree.

To thrive, every organism must create the conditions for its own evolution. In other words, self-actualization ultimately depends upon creative work, innovations that are life enabling. Art is uniquely equipped in this regard because its creative dimension works toward, not merely subsistence, but the cultivation of an elevated existence: "Morality and art are to this extent parallel: they stir the human spirit to a realization of its own creative possibilities, of what it can do and be. They do not derive from inanimate nature....rather they shape, direct and transform it" (Berlin 175). It is in this fundamental sense then, that art motivates social change. It is not only through the development and exchange of ideas, and through vitally important modeling of political praxis, but by way of being change in itself, instantiating the transformative moment, that art inspires and enacts political movement in any direction.

Evidence of art's success in impelling progressive, morality based social action is, while understudied, ample. For instance, Rickie Solinger et al. (2008) present 23 case studies that document the capacity for narrative storytelling to galvanize social activism. But perhaps the most comprehensive documentation of the role of art in social movements can be found in Jacqueline Adams' work, which illustrates that even under the most clandestine circumstances, art executes "framing" and "resource mobilization" (Adams 21), determining how social conditions are represented, and garnering various kinds of public support to address them. These terms are noteworthy because of the particularly active and concrete way in which they describe the social impact of aesthetics.

I have just outlined contemporary perspectives on art's role in social and political construction because I wish to propose that we can gain an even deeper insight into art and social change by conceiving of art as the cultivation of cultural memory. In some sense, when we are talking about the dissemination of ideas, framing and collectivizing around them, we are talking about how cultural memory is transmitted and taken up. I will elaborate on this concept in chapter 2. Again, I undertake to do this with the knowledge that art's social value is commonly either rejected or assumed within Canadian society without adequate argument, which calls for a more developed theory of art's political dimension. According to Peter Bürger "a developed aesthetic theory of engaged art does not exist" (Bürger 97). To the extent that arguments on behalf of art, such as those cited above, do exist, I intend this dissertation to be a contribution to that discourse, employing the concept of cultural memory alongside a socialist feminist critique to focus attention on the impact of material conditions on the production of cultural memory.

Before entering into a more specific discussion of the parameters of cultural memory and its relationship to art in the next chapter, it is necessary to first consider here the significance of the subject in actualizing social change since all of the arguments above on the social and political impacts of art assume the individual who is impacted. It is necessary to stop and query the real potential of individuals to act, separately or collectively, or to be changed by the arts in any way. In fact, I believe it is the concept of cultural memory that best enables us to argue on behalf of art's efficacy

in this regard by explaining how the arts access the subject. By examining the work of Donald Hall, Sherry Ortner, and Paul Smith below, I will argue here that cultural memory is productive of social change through its relation to subjectivity.

Art's Imbrication in Subjectivity and Social Change

There is near consensus in the literature that texts/cultural signs/representations, construct the subject (at least to some extent) and thereby play a role in social change. In fact, this dynamic is "central" to the literature on subjectivity. According to Donald Hall, "a central concern is how we should—and to what extent we even have an ability to— change society through concerted individual action, and the ways that cultural representation can, does, or does not abet those changes" (Hall 5). Such a project requires an understanding of the effects of art—one means of cultural representation—on the subject as an agent of change. Likewise, Sherry Ortner is concerned with a subject who is shaped by art, if art can be understood as symbolic forms, influencing (un)consciousness and action. She states, "By subjectivity I mean the ensemble of modes of perception, affect, thought, desire, and fear that animate the acting subject. But I always mean as well the cultural and social formations that shape, organize, and provoke those modes of affect, thought, and so on" (Ortner 11). For Ortner, subjectivity and representation are symbiotic. The subject connects art and social change and anchors the theories that make such connections. The dynamics of subject

construction by art and perception must therefore be outlined.

I will consider the particular dynamic between the subject and the symbolic order—or how cultural formations construct consciousness—in a moment. But first, I want to question how consciousness (by this I mean Ortner's "modes of perception, affect, thought, desire, and fear") "animate[s] the acting subject". The literature explores this topic by asking whether it is sufficient to make subjects aware of power and subjectivity, to change their "mode of perception", and thereby change their subject positions. Is drawing people into recognition of control/subjectivity/the potential for self-determination adequate to animate them, to make them agents of social change, and therein to affect an immediate kind of change? Theorists and social movements argue, "one can gain control over that which has controlled one's consciousness by becoming conscious of that dynamic of control" (Hall 55). But Hall, following Karl Marx, argues that one cannot simply change one's subject position by recognizing it (Hall 55). As Paul Smith explains, even if you consciously recognize alternate subject positions, you cannot simply choose between them, for "who or what would be the agent of such a choice? On what grounds would such a choice be made? How, in any case, does a subject-position in reserve translate into lived activity?" (Paul Smith 38). Given these complexities, Smith is able to insist that recognition does permit resistance, and that you can both recognize and resist through the variability of subject positions you possess, because they make total interpellation into any one subject position impossible, and they reveal the contradictions that exist between the subject positions you occupy.

This kind of resistance enables a fragmented identity to undo the mono-logic of dominant ideology (Paul Smith 59) as an imperative to critique arises. Such deconstruction can then lead to a practical ethics and program for political change (i.e. the conscious development of rules and principles for action) because the subject has been moved to a place of agency wherein she is capable of asserting something progressive (i.e. formulating action), thereby rendering ideological resistance effective.

Feminism is an example of this movement from consciousness-raising to resistance to political action and social change. Feminism is not only a philosophy but also a political project to both negate patriarchy and posit new structures for women's equality. It has generated real change precisely through the concomitant singularity (i.e. its historical specificity) and diversity of its composition; it is able to ideologically access the fissures between the multiple subject positions of its participants, straddling race and class interests, for example, and straddling various roles both internal and external to patriarchal relationships, such as wife and scholar. By manifesting itself in multiple forms and arenas, it can enable subjects to balance and reconcile their multiple subject positions because it creates diverse sites of contestation and non-essentializing responses to the ubiquity of patriarchy. Consequently, it has had success in empowering agency rather than merely inducing or highlighting anxiety.

Anxiety is a complication of consciousness-raising. While psychoanalysis and existentialism posit that there is a route to ideological resistance through the individual psyche, some argue that this route is inadequate because the substantial freedom of self-

determination is accompanied by a paralyzing anxiety and responsibility; consequently, "our ability to think ourselves out of our own neuroses is highly limited, even doomed to failure" (Hall 64). However, both Psychoanalysts and Marxists Existentialists argue that such an undertaking would not be wholly solitary, given the role of individuation, the collective unconscious, and utilitarian ethics (Hall 76). In other words, the responsibility to others persists as an imperative to action in the face of anxiety. So we can conclude that self-determination is manageable, despite anxiety, given the relational situation of the subject, and the responsibility to others that produces solidarity. This is one reason why people enter into social movements, to collaborate in making change, together overcoming the anxiety and rising to the responsibility, which are consequences of consciousness-raising.

But let us return to the question of art's role in the service of consciousness raising, resistance, action, and solidarity. Paul Smith is useful here in establishing that art plays a role in reconciling the fragmented aspects of our psyches, not so that the fragmentation is ultimately dissolved, but so that we are able to act. He looks to psychoanalysis for a way to theorize a subject that has agency, one that is heterogeneous in that it is constituted by various subject positions, which make it both harder to control and more available to redefinition. Smith looks to feminist psychoanalysts in particular to discover "how and in what manners resistance to the ideological is conditioned" (Paul Smith 22). His inquiry raises the question, how does art intervene in the multiplicity of the subject, or access ideological fissures? This

question is answered by Kristeva's dialectic of the semiotic (desire, feeling) and symbolic (law, thought), which she charts within avant-garde literature.[9] These connotative and denotative levels of meaning are interdependent, and I note their similarity to what Friedrich Nietzsche identifies as the Apollonian and Dionysion principles of Greek mythology (Nietzsche, Birth). Smith reveals that the arts can participate in resistance through this dialectical dimension, this heterogeneity, evident in Kristeva's analysis of literature. Essentially, the dialectical nature of the arts enables the arts to relate the self and the social (artist to audience, audience to audience, etc.) "the subjective and the objective [i.e. as it engages the interdependent dualities of meaning and interpretation, form and content], ... the symbolic and the real" (Paul Smith 124); I would add that, in its presentation of ideas, art also engages the actual and potential. In other words, the arts participate in resistance through a dialectical process of reconciling (because it is always ultimately about itself[10]) and rearticulating its own heterogeneity, as this parallels the dialectics of social conflict, the subject's own

[9] I think it is reasonable to move from "literature" to "art" here for two reasons; first, literature is one of many art forms, which no more immediately transmits ideas than other mediums. In some cases, one may be more immediately impacted by an image or a score, for instance, than a text. Furthermore, text is also image, language is also sound. The categories of art and literature not only overlap; they are embedded in each other. Secondly, manifestations of art other than literature constitute other forms of language, since they too consist of a dialectical tension between the semiotic and symbolic.

[10] Further unpacking of the connection between art, consciousness and social action will proceed later in this chapter. By sublimating the empirical world, art becomes self-referential—artworks are after all things representing things; art thereby achieves a "heightened order of existence" for empirical reality, which it animates as the subject of art/representation (Adorno, "Art" 4). In this regard, art is intimately tied up with the material world at the same time that it exceeds empiricism. It is this duality that both enables and restricts artistic autonomy and political implication (Adorno, "Art" 6).

dialectical process, her own heterogeneity, her own otherness between structure and agency. This is how I interpret and would like to extend Smith. Like feminism, the arts can appeal to, and facilitate, the multiple subject positions of the subject and connect or partially reconcile contradictions within her existence, enabling her orientation and action. Furthermore, this reconciliation promotes responsibility between and among social actors. This is especially so since it is the subject's heterogeneity that makes her a subject—able to relate with other subjects—and not an object.

To understand the effect of Kristeva's dialectic further, it is worth reconsidering the heterogeneity-induced anxiety of the subject as the locus of social change. Essentially, art's reconciliatory action does not dissolve anxiety, but aids in rendering it constructive. Max Weber has explained how the anxiety of the modern subject was intensified by Protestantism's "doctrine of predestination and its assumption of the remoteness and inaccessibility of God" (Ortner 115), which left one with an "unprecedented inner loneliness" (qtd. in Ortner 115) and fed "the spirit of capitalism" by promoting a compensation found in rationalized productivity. Ortner claims that such anxiety is not just an effect of modernity (although its particular object of anxiety might be) but is rather central to "the condition of being a cultural creature" (Ortner 118). Clifford Geertz explains that the subject always fears "conceptual chaos" (e.g. in the notion of human/animal hybridity), and that we "literally depend on external symbolic culture... to survive" (i.e. to provide conceptual order) (qtd. in Ortner 118-119) given our internal complexity and experience of contradiction. For Jameson too,

the anxiety ridden subject contains "various kinds of complex subjectivities" (qtd. in Ortner 121), the productive potential of which has already been outlined above, borrowing from Paul Smith. Hence, anxiety itself seems to be a real and potential source of resistance in so far as it is tied to the heterogeneity of the subject and the dialectic of social change. But that anxiety must be rendered meaningful through negative dialectics, the negation of the negation, which means that negative ontological conditions are responded to with a refusal that opens up a space for the ontological alternatives to emerge (Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*). Art can perform this refusal or negation and transform anxiety into critique through its own dialectic as the symbolizing stage of semiotic angst (Marcuse, *Aesthetic Dimension*).

We must not forget that heterogeneity-induced anxiety can also be inhibiting. For Jameson, postmodern architecture in particular stands accused of this problematic, of failing to facilitate the reconciliation potential to art, leaving us mired in anxiety rather than moving us toward action and responsibility (Ortner 122). Postmodern forms (Jameson's primary example is the architecture of Las Vegas) cannot provide a meaningful order, it is argued, because they can only represent what is not merely complex and multiple, but shattered beyond recognition. This is the result of what is unique about postmodern aesthetics, which is according to Jameson its close integration "into commodity production" (Jameson 4) and multinational capitalism; it uses fragmentation to mask the sameness of production. This has already been identified by the Frankfurt school in relation to capitalism: myopic and superficial ontologies,

determined by false needs and libidinal repressions. Hence, the subject is not productively alienated but hopelessly disoriented and, consequently, emotionally reduced (Ortner 122). She is in a state of inescapable conceptual chaos, and without agency.

Postmodernism also challenges our faith in reconciliation through cultural forms by claiming that the concept of culture as

> the worldview or ethos of a particular group of people....is too undifferentiated, too homogeneous: given various forms of social difference and social inequality, how could everyone in a given society share the same view of the world and the same orientation towards it? ...the homogeneity and lack of differentiation in the culture concept ties it closely to "essentialism" (Ortner 112).

This would suggest that art can be an agent of homogeneity. However, Ortner overcomes this critique by explaining that "while recognizing the very real dangers of 'culture' in its potential for essentializing and demonizing whole groups of people, one must recognize its critical political value as well, both for understanding the working of power [i.e. that it tries to homogenize] and for understanding the resources of the powerless [i.e. their opportunities to disrupt the homogenous]" (Ortner 113). Art can be a resource on either side. It is a material manifestation of culture, through which cultural power and resistance can be examined (because they have been made material) as an epistemological ground of subjectivity. Art also breaks open the homogenous

facade of culture because it is heterogeneous. It "can no more be reduced to the general formula of consolation than to its opposite" because "by virtue of its rejection of the empirical world... art sanctions the primacy of reality" (Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* 2). It is non-reducible solely to the commodity, despite the contingency of its autonomy. Even when it is employed in the service of cultural homogeneity, art creates the conditions for its own overturning by creating something to resist or work against. It is also heterogeneous in the diversity of its material manifestations and in that it encompasses multiple dialectics, not least of which is the fact that "it exists only in relation to its other" (Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* 3) as it is always in the process of becoming. As Adorno explains, "the concept of art is located in a historically changing constellation of elements; it refuses definition" (Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* 2). Therefore, the arts are seemingly, perhaps even singularly, well suited to the project of radical social change. As individual psyches are not homogenous, heterogeneous aesthetics are consistent media for their transformation.

The question remains: How would the arts provide conceptual order if they embrace heterogeneity? They establish the order of heterogeneity, through representation. It is like the Balinese cockfight described by Geertz; it "orders [a myriad of anxiety inducing cultural themes] into an encompassing structure.... It puts a construction on them, makes them...meaningful—visible, tangible, graspable" (qtd. in Ortner 117). This can also be understood as the construction of cultural memory; it too is never homogenous. For example, feminist artists who consciously engage in cultural

memory making projects harness the symbolic field to orient subjects in a particular, historical consciousness, based on a memory of violence against women that is heterogeneous yet stable, re-centering subjects in such a way that they are both made cognizant of their potential to construct a past that differs from dominant history, and they are (thereby) empowered to construct a future of difference. This dynamic has been documented to some extent in a book I co-wrote entitled Remembering *Women* Murdered by Men: Memorials Across Canada (Cultural Memory Group). Following chapters will elaborate on this dynamic and expand it in a different direction by analyzing one artist's body of work in the museum context, to establish the heterogeneous means of establishing a coherent cultural memory.

It could be argued that cultural memory can provide depth, orientation, narration and thus resistance to the culture of late capitalism, which is otherwise determined by the "principle of 'no long term'" (Ortner 124). Acts of feminist cultural memory making exist alongside hegemonic forms (like capitalism and postmodernism—points I will argue in chapter 3), but they introduce a heterogeneity that is key to a "fully cultural consciousness" which is "always multilayered and reflexive" (Ortner 127), and can therefore facilitate negative dialectics, the basis of revolutionary activity. But negative dialectics requires more than conscious negation. As Jameson explains, "resistance involves not just conscious self-constituting acts, but also the agent's individual history, conceived here as a memory" (qtd. in Paul Smith 68). Both conceptually and semantically, this sentence suggests the place of cultural memory in

dynamics of social change. The unconscious is the place in which memory is stored; it is itself a heterogeneous space, "between 'subject' and Other" (Paul Smith 76), neither wholly knowable nor unknowable. As such, it is not directly determined by discourses impinging on consciousness. Consequently, to be an instrument of social change art must affect subjectivity through both consciousness and the unconscious. As an agent of cultural memory, art achieves this duality because recalling a memory is conscious, but it is inculcated at the unconscious level. This inculcation of memory, which is performed by aesthetics, must also be progressive however. To be a medium of memory art cannot merely be relegated to impressions upon the unconscious, or to articulating a disabling negation. It must also be creative; it must actually draw from and build memory to enable agency. As Herbert Marcuse has explained in the *Aesthetic Dimension*, the arts can stimulate instincts that are repressed by Thantic society, and it can counter this repression by bringing the Erotic into consciousness. He writes, "the life instincts rebel against the global sado-masochistic phase of contemporary civilization. The return of the repressed, achieved and preserved in the work of art, may intensify this rebellion" (Marcuse, Aesthetic 64). In chapter 2, I will further explore how the arts can build memory.

So the heterogeneity of the subject, of life, of art, of cultural memory, is essential to politicizing the subject. Hall makes a similar claim for the dependency of agency on heterogeneous conditions. He describes his understanding of the liberatory potential of heterogeneity when he writes "only by pluralizing our intellectual engagement and

activities, by recognizing community and foregrounding the necessary, ongoing revision of those engagements is human being rendered significantly different from the being of those entities that are instinct-driven or simply mechanical" (Hall 130). He is describing a kind of self-reflexivity that empowers us to abandon naturalized subjectivities[11], but his depiction also brings us full circle in these readings; he is indicating that we have created a social context characterized by heterogeneity, which reflects our anxiety about heterogeneity, and thus, orders it.

In this chapter I have developed in part the ground upon which a claim for art's significance to social change might rest. I argue that it is important to reference empirical studies that demonstrate the viral, modeling, and transformative effects of the arts, and to perceive art's mediation between consciousness and action in its engagement with subjectivity. It is important to back-up philosophical deductions with empirical evidence and vice versa, recognizing that neither approach on its own would be adequately persuasive. Each could be erroneous in its own right, relying on some degree of bias, but this two-pronged approach reduces the likelihood of overlooking alternatives, and it enforces the conclusions I have drawn about how we should proceed in our perception of the arts as a facilitator of social change. Together the social science and humanities approaches allow us to directly inquire into the practical conditions of political action and also the psychological processes at play, what people actually seem to do and why they might be doing it. I have written this chapter because

[11] This critique is relevant to my deconstruction of the Charlotte Salomon exhibition, in chapter 4 where I argue that the exhibition presents a problematically linear representation of the artist's subjectivity.

it is necessary to substantiate claims on behalf of art's social value and political effects. Having established the impact of aesthetics on subjectivity, I will now develop in chapter 2 and 3 a theory of cultural memory that advances our understanding of this impact and our knowledge of art's political dimension.

Chapter 2: Establishing Art's Cultural Memory as an Agent of Social Change: Definitions & Applications

> More studies of the way memory practices are central features of modern and postmodern life and more theories of these epochal forms with memory at their heart should follow.... social memory studies is not a narrow subfield. It provides powerful lessons for sociology as a whole, is consonant with the reformation of historical sociology now occurring, and provides important insights for theory at the broadest level. Sociology, we argue, cannot afford to forget memory. (Olick & Robbins pdf 20)

Cultural memory is a concept that seems to have significant currency, especially in the wake of 20th century manifestations of violence—domestic and international in scope—shifting borders, and reorganized empires. However, our understanding of what cultural memory is and how it functions can be better developed and employed to illuminate the social value of the arts. This is what I aim to do in the current chapter by examining the meaning and value of "memory" within social and aesthetic thought. I will argue that cultural memory constitutes a dialectical unfolding facilitated by aesthetics that resonates in bodies and minds. Consequently, the concept of cultural memory will help us to understand the political capacity of the arts, how they define, transform and mobilize agents.

Memory as Power and Resistance

Memory is called on in the service of power from above and from below, in the construction of subjectivity and in its subversion. The literature on memory explores how notions of the past inform identity and are transmitted through various cultural veins, especially the family, generational peers, public *lieux de memoires* (Nora), ritual, and other symbolic forms such as media and political rhetoric. For example, in their work on traumatic memory as pedagogy, Roger Simon et al. explain how media contains memories used to establish and inform collective action:

Social memories are produced as bounded sets of symbolizations (texts, images, songs, monuments, and rituals) and associated emotions. Collectivities share these as ways of stabilizing and transmitting particular versions of past events and, in so doing, attempt to offer perspectives on present dilemmas and future aspirations. Formations of memory, in this view, are efforts to mobilize attachments and knowledge that serve specific social and political interests within particular spatiotemporal frameworks. (Simon et al. 3) In other words, the semiotic and symbolic dynamics of artistic media mobilize solidarity because they capture and convey memories that underlie group association. For this reason, "control of a society's memory largely conditions the hierarchy of power" (Connerton 1). As a consequence of memory's capacity to associate individuals with collectivities across points in time, memory has an ethical

dimension that is underwritten by political power.

In a more recent elaboration on Paul Connerton's assertion that "the struggle of citizens against state power is the struggle of their memory against forced forgetting" (Connerton 15), Naomi Klein argues that memory deprivation is a fundamental tactic of violence. It is both the consequence and the precedence of "shock therapy", which she documents as a morally bankrupt method of psychiatric research, and as a means of socio-economic domination within the paradigm of "disaster capitalism". In even the most extreme cases, Klein finds that memory is continuously rebuilt[12], leading her to conclude that "memory, both individual and collective, turns out to be the greatest shock absorber of all" (Klein 557). Likewise, Walter Benjamin highlights the resilience and redemption of memory when he asserts that memory intervenes in "moments of danger" by escaping the totalizing embrace of hegemonic discourse (Benjamin 255-6). Memory persists both in the psyche and in counter hegemonic practices.[13]

In *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, Foucault conceives of such counter-memory as counter-discourse, and this seems to be the definition of memory (discourse from or about the past) prevalently assumed by others[14]. Streams of Marxism (e.g.

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[12] One example of memory being rebuilt can be found in the preservation of Kurdish culture, which is facilitated by the work of kilim (i.e. carpet) weavers in southeastern Turkey, where a criminalized population labours under a state that refuses to permit its people even to speak the Kurdish language. Another example, more pertinent to Klein's context, are the worker recovered factories of Argentina, which incorporate cultural workshops and educational centres within them, to express, process, celebrate, record and transmit the experience of the workers and their communities.

[13] These may be consciously or unconsciously political, as in the case of dialect speakers who maintain a language against the hegemony of the state, in Italy for instance.

[14] In chapter 3 I will begin to distinguish memory from discourse.

Marx, Benjamin, Marcuse) recognize memory as the recollection of what is forgotten or repressed by dominant discourse—countering the amnesiac effect of capitalist processes that erase the economic relations and labour history behind the commodity. For scholars such as Andreas Huyssen, memory is also a way "to claim some anchoring space in a world of puzzling and often threatening heterogeneity, non-synchronicity, and information overload" (Huyssen 7) which characterizes capitalist society. Memory can be understood to facilitate social re-orientation because of its relational quality; it is "the mechanism through which we feel pride, pain, or shame with regard to events that happened to our groups before we joined them" (Olick & Robbins pdf 13). This finding leads Jefferey K. Olick and Joyce Robbins to claim that "memory is a central, if not the central, medium through which identities are constituted" (Olick & Robbins pdf 20). Consequently, what is at stake in memory is the capacity of agents to locate themselves within, and also to direct, personal and social levels of existence.

Narrowing the Field of Study

Olick and Robbins provide an exhaustive overview of the various terms used by theorists to discuss memory, noting that "both the public and academia have become saturated with references to social or collective memory" (Olick & Robbins pdf 2). These scholars approach social memory studies as "a general rubric for inquiry into the varieties of forms through which we are shaped by the past, conscious and unconscious, public and private, material and communicative, consensual and challenged" (Olick &

Robbins pdf 5-6). In their attempt to define such a wide-ranging area of study, they examine "sets of mnemonic practices in various social sites" and thereby distinguish social memory from every other kind of social reproduction (such as custom or tradition), and avoid "reifying a mystical group mind", or asserting the hegemony of homogeneous memory (Olick & Robbins pdf 5-6, emphasis mine).

The transmission of socially constructive memory through mnemonic practices can in part be understood using Marita Sturken's broad concept of cultural memory, which she describes as "memory that is shared outside the avenues of formal historical discourse yet is entangled with cultural products and imbued with cultural meaning" (Sturken 3).[15] Sturken is building on Jan Assman's association between cultural memory and aesthetic experience. Assman writes, "the concept of cultural memory comprises that body of reusable texts, images, and rituals specific to each society in each epoch, whose 'cultivation' serves to stabilize and convey that society's self-image" (Assman 9). Such cultural products include the arts, and artistic practice can therefore be read as mnemonic practice. While it is important to recognize that the cultural signification underlying cultural memory extends beyond the fine and performing arts (for instance, political, commercial and familial discourses are not self-consciously artistic but are agents of cultural memory), it is explicitly engaged by such artistic practices, which in turn influence other cultural memory-making sites through the process of memory's transmission and reiteration.

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[15] Even more broadly, Sturken eloquently describes "the memory landscape that we inhabit....a complex mix of narrative, displacement, shared testimony, popular culture, rumour, fantasy, and collective desire" (Sturken 234).

Memory and Representation

It should not be assumed that cultural memory, whether dominant or subversive, is simply reflected in art. In fact, some argue that artistic form is necessary to the production of memory because the difficulty of remembrance requires that a memory must always be inscribed to be realized; a memory "can only be fully present, even to the memory worker, when it acquires a more elaborated form: written, spoken or visualized. In this sense remembering is dependent on the means of representation available in the present" (Claire & Johnson 213). Furthermore, the material characteristics of the medium impact the transmission of cultural memory by shaping what is conveyed, stored, or represented[16]. Memory's dependence on representation facilitates its personal and socio-political value since it enables the writing and rewriting of history; "without the effort to remember and without cultural forms to remember with, there is no continuity; without the effort of reworking versions of the past, there can be no change" (Claire & Johnson 221). Huyssen asserts that representation is also dependent on memory, when he argues that all representation is based on the recollection of experience (Huyssen 2).

Given this interdependence of memory and representation, it is not surprising that artists are often centrally concerned with the subject of memory in their work. This tendency has led Joan Gibbons to survey the role of memory in contemporary art and the historical conception of memory in art and philosophy. She documents artworks

[16] Chapter 3, 4, and 5 engage further with the materialism of representation by analyzing the impact of a specific artwork and its aesthetic strategies.

that address private and indexical memory, recovered social and political memory, Holocaust memory, "relational" re-enactments, and the ordering of knowledge and memory data (Gibbons 8). She concludes that "given the amount and variety of attention paid to memory in contemporary art, it is rather surprising that it has been written about only sporadically in relation to particular artists or particular exhibitions" (Gibbons 7). The theory of cultural memory that I aim to develop here responds to this observation that we have not adequately grappled with the memory value of art.

Despite the currency of "memory" in social theory, cultural studies, and artistic practice, and despite popular faith in its fundamental significance to human life generally and to political transformation specifically, there has been relatively little development of the cultural memory concept, or explanation of the means by which art can be understood to convey memory. Indeed, in their wide-ranging survey of the field, Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning assert, "despite two decades of intensive research, the design of a conceptual toolbox for cultural memory studies is still at a fledgling stage" (Erll 2). Perhaps this lacuna is understandable since "memory" intuitively resonates with personal and private processes of recollection and narration, and is therefore a taken-for-granted concept when extrapolated to artistic practices. Individual processes of memory are more thoroughly studied and, through immediate experience, memory is widely understood to be "the act of bringing experience to reflection and/or to issue, the act of embodying an act or object or place or concept in some portion of the brain or another" (Mortimer-Sandilands 274). Beyond our basic understanding of how

representation articulates and instantiates memory, how exactly, and with what significance, might art intervene in this process of remembering, and expand our understanding of memory?

To answer this question, I propose that we develop the content of the concept of cultural memory by employing existing aesthetic theory, reinterpreting central, historical arguments on behalf of art's social value, as explanations of art's memory-making means and mechanisms. I wish to foreground within the tradition of western aesthetic theory an understanding of aesthetic value that is essentially an understanding of art's mnemonic dimension. By understanding art's mnemonic dimension we can develop the concept of cultural memory, elucidate art's impact on memory and identify its consequent impact on social life as a source of cultural memory that can enable political action.

Reading "Cultural Memory" from Aesthetic Theory

When we examine the social relevance assigned to art across history, we discover that a consistent set of rationales has been maintained in the literature of aesthetic theory, while a radical transformation has simultaneously occurred therein. This transformation is not unlike that in the realm of moral and political philosophy, which Isaiah Berlin characterized in his comparison of classical and romantic thought by writing, "there begins to emerge the notion that perhaps value judgments are not

descriptive propositions at all [...] that values are not discovered but invented" (Berlin 10, emphasis mine). It is this constructed, creative and humanistic quality of "values" that has overtime moved the dominant perception of art from the realm of revealed metaphysical ideals to the region of material realities, while maintaining a common understanding of art's unique virtue. Passing from antiquity, through the Enlightenment and into the Romantic era, art becomes increasing integrative for western thought, tending to consolidate aesthetic principles with the very possibility of human existence. I will argue that this movement in history gives us insight into the concept of cultural memory as the ongoing reconciliation between dialectical forces that are central to social preservation and transformation. I will selectively examine pivotal thinkers in the western aesthetic tradition to illustrate the mnemonic dimension of aesthetics. These authors represent a historical trajectory, but they also offer specific arguments about aesthetic value that I wish to redeploy as definitions of cultural memory.

I will begin with Aristotle's contribution to early, western classical aesthetics as it is both representative of major arguments about art's social value stretching into the present day, and can be used to develop our understanding of the cultural memory concept. His theory of catharsis reveals that the arts can intervene in memory by provoking reflection on vicarious experiences. Aristotle is a particularly important starting point for this dissertation because his argument overcomes Plato's earlier and now infamous concern (in Book V of *The Republic*) that the sentiments evoked by poetry are a danger to rational society. This concern has persisted, most notably as a

factor motivating iconoclasm and in contemporary Canadian ambivalence about the arts as described in my introduction. In contrast, Aristotle contends that artistic sentiments can exorcise and transform our emotional impulses, disabling them as sources of social and psychological disruption. Aristotle offers us an explanation of art's cathartic capacity, its ability to aid in socio-psycho well being by provoking the purging of emotions through the unity and coherence of plot, character, and style (Aristotle 27). Art's representation of universal laws (through its embodiment of beauty and unity, as well as in its representation of probability or cause and effect) strengthens the audience's rational and moral faculties by providing them with objects of contemplation (Aristotle 25, 30). They also take pleasure in experiencing art because it satisfies an instinct toward learning (Aristotle 25). Consequently, art is believed to serve individual and collective well-being by developing one's cognitive skills in accordance with metaphysical ideals.

I want to argue that art's cathartic, contemplative and educational capacities, evoke or constitute the process of memory as *a cognitive process of reflection and integration of experiential knowledge, that compels collective and vicarious feeling, and leads to a learning by example*. This is the definitional content that Aristotle's theory of catharsis might add to the evolving concept of cultural memory and our understanding of art's memory making capacity.

Aristotelian concepts of art's moral and rational effects re-emerge in the writing of Longinus, whose theory of the Sublime I wish to employ in revealing another mode

of art's intervention in memory, as revelation, or a return of the repressed (to use Marcuse's language). Longinus describes the artistic Sublime as art's capacity to provoke sheer amazement concerning the nature of objective existence, rather than mere persuasion, or pleasure, even beyond the action of catharsis; art has the power to move its audience into moments of ecstatic understanding (Longinus 56). Longinus concerns himself to identify the five sources of this effect in the artwork's rhetorical structure and in the artist's innate genius, specifically, "the faculty of grasping great conceptions"; "passion, strong and impetuous"; "the proper handling of figures"; "noble phraseology" and "dignified and spirited composition" (Longinus 60). Emphasis has begun to shift, in this theoretical body, from the function and form of art, onto the artist's inspiration and the skilled artist's peculiar capacity to inspire (through stylistic devices) rather than merely generate well-being. For Longinus, art accesses the immortal—"the greatness of man's soul" in the case of both artist and audience (Longinus 72). In other words, the Sublime facilitates the recollection of a deep, existential ontology. I argue that Longinus therefore offers us an understanding of the Sublime as a mnemonic device, which enhances our perception of art's mnemonic capacity and expands our definition of cultural memory to encompass the existential. Consequently, cultural memory can additionally be understood *as recollection of what lay beyond the reality principle, beyond the limitations of a present state of material existence.*

I have argued thus far that keystone texts in the western aesthetic tradition

position art as a means of persuasion, pleasure, and transcendence of the material realm, and that this is all affected through what I wish to conceive of as mnemonic processes, thereby adding content to the concept of "cultural memory". While Romantic philosophers such as Edmund Burke and David Hume sustain classical understandings of art's pedagogical and spiritual value, they explicitly perceive art as the embodiment of the dialectical. Some basis for this development can be found in Aristotle and Longinus, since both have faith in art as an instrument of mediation. However, the Romantics invert the idealism of classical dialectics with a materialist perspective, stimulated by the passage through Enlightenment empiricism. This intervention represents a move away from Idealism toward a grounding of art in human action, away from the discovery of aesthetic and moral values toward their construction and cultivation. From the Enlightenment and Romantic periods, the concept of cultural memory can gain definitional dimension as *constructed knowledge in the service of political will and material advancement.* In the work of Burke and Hume art is a means of human cultivation and construction because, through our comparison of a representation and its object, through the association and contemplation of different and similar images, "we produce *new images*; we unite, we create, we enlarge our stock" (Burke, On Taste 18, emphasis mine). Hence, the reception of art becomes a *creative, and dialectical* act, one leading from, and potentially to, a synthesis of "the primary pleasures of sense", "the secondary pleasures of the imagination", "the conclusions of the reasoning faculty, concerning the various relations of these, and concerning the

human passions, manners, and actions", which culminates in an intellectual and *embodied* advancement of knowledge (Burke, On Taste 23). Again we find here an allusion to the cognitive process of memory—in the *synthesis of the embodied and the intellectual.*

Burke also enlarges the concept of the Sublime from Longinus in a way that is useful to our understanding of *dialectical* cultural memory. He endows it with a relationalism that underlies Romantic politics[17]. For Burke, the Sublime is the psychological effect of holding terror—"the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling"—at a safe distance in the representation of pain and suffering, such that the greatness of the thing is internalized through one's very ability to apprehend it (Burke, *On the Sublime* 46). To me this aesthetic dynamic is another way in which the arts embody the dynamic of memory, since it is a function of memory to hold trauma at a distance as an object of contemplation and often, in the case of collective memory, holds the trauma of others in an empathetic position. Burke further argues that this dynamic generates self-preservation and sympathy for others in pain, "to relieve ourselves in relieving those who suffer" (Burke, *On the Sublime* 36, 42). So our ability to sympathize with another's pain—and thereby motivate self-preservation because we "delight" in our removal from pain— is really a necessary condition for our survival.

[17] I am referring to the humanist ideals dictating compassion and equality that underwrote the Romantic era's attacks on industrialism, urbanism, religion, and the state. In addition to Burke, Shelley and Schiller provide quintessential examples of this ethos.

In so far as art cultivates our empathetic memory[18], we can conclude from Burke's essay, it is no less than a matter of life or death. The Sublime's primary role in rendering art socially relevant is additionally elaborated in the Romantic period when theorists become concerned with how such excitation of the imagination triggers will, imperative to the actualization of individuals, on which a democratic politics depends. So if we employ Burke following on Longinus to situate the Sublime as a feature of the mnemonic, we can better understand cultural memory as *self-preservation and political agitation in so far as it stimulates empathy.*

To review, there is a negotiation in art theory between a conception of art as engagement with the material world of human thought and action, and alternatively, with a realm of ideals that extends beyond the real. This dialectic is negotiated, I am arguing, by what is essentially memory work, if we conceive of that in the ways I have just outlined: as learning by example, extended to recollection of the repressed, cultivated empathy, and praxis. By examining the selected texts we can see how this definition of cultural memory can be constructed from established arguments on the aesthetic.

Memory itself shares with art a dialectical nature, a grounding in both the real and the ideal if, as I propose, we understand memory as a negotiation between matter and spirit, body and mind, permanence and transformation, self and other, or past, present

[18] Ernst Van Alphen concurs. In his reading of multiple sites in which personal and collective memory converge, he concludes, "the sublime can offer a solution to this rivalry between *their* memory (which is both plural and other) and my own memory.... We can use sublime experience to break out of individualism" (Van Alphen 204 emphasis original).

and future. So I am making two points here. First, foundational texts concerning art's social relevance can also be understood as explanation of art's memory work, and thus develop the concept of cultural memory with the following three definitions:

1) cognitive processes of reflection and integration of experiential knowledge, that compel[19] collective and vicarious feeling, and lead to a learning by example
2) recollection of what lay beyond the reality principle, beyond the limitations of a present state of material existence
3) constructed knowledge in the service of political will and material advancement based on empathy, which is stimulated through a synthesis of the embodied and the intellectual modes of perception.

Note that each of these definitions demonstrates the dialectical nature of cultural memory, by which I mean that cultural memory is the product of contrasting but interdependent forces and therefore constitutes a kind of active transformation of social significance. Cultural memory emerges through the dialectical method so we must examine the dialectics at work in the arts to understand how art becomes the terrain of cultural memory. Consequently, my consideration of foundational arguments for art's social relevance (cited above) point toward an understanding of art as dialectics (a way of thinking about the arts that should be reprioritized) and, likewise reveal the dialectical nature of the project of cultural memory-making.

[19] The compulsion is through form and reason, the psychological need for catharsis, and the pleasure of contemplation, as described by Aristotle.

A History of the Concept of Art as Dialectical

I will briefly examine five major contributions to our understanding of art as dialectics—Hegel, Nietzsche, Marx, Jameson, and Marcuse—to illuminate the dialectical quality of my definition of cultural memory and to suggest how the dialectic of memory is active in the work of art. I am arguing that the work of art is always a way of working out memory and the dialectics it engages. The work remembers or forgets experiences and ideas (moments in the unfolding of other dialectics) and prompts the same within subjects. In this way memory can be heuristically employed as a surrounding dialectic of remembering and forgetting, within which all other dialectics (such as male/female, rules/freedom, form/content) are negotiated; they are the struggles of memory, and the objects of memory, just as they are constitutive of memory.

A dialectical understanding of art was explicitly articulated by G.W.F. Hegel, who wrote of art's capacity to reconcile rules with freedom, which I argue is facilitated by memory. For Hegel, art makes sensuous the (Platonic) Idea, and is therefore a means of realizing truth about ourselves, what we are and can be, our immanent form. Art allows a man to reflect on his desires at a remove, since it presents his desires to him through representation. He can then perceive a desire as "an object which he contrasts with himself" (Hegel 54). In this way, he learns to experience the sensuous (which is rule bound in the work of art) intellectually, and he thereby learns to think freely and critically, which is prerequisite to his ability to make morally sound choices.

Hegel writes, "art has the vocation of revealing the truth in the form of sensuous artistic shape, of representing the reconciled antithesis [between the material and immaterial]... and, therefore, has its purpose in itself, in this representation and revelation" (Hegel 61). In effect, for Hegel art *is* this reconciliation; as such its value is that it renders meaning to the mundane by translating the universal into the immediacy of the material world, and vice versa. Hegel introduces us to the idea that art is dialectical in a way that reveals the memory work of art as a negotiation between the real and the idea.[20] We build memory, a storehouse of critical thought and experience which is the basis of moral action, through this process of synthesizing the sensuous and abstract in our reflections on art,

In Nietzsche's rendering of aesthetic dialectics, one can begin to perceive memory as the dialectical reckoning of Eros (the life instinct) and Thanatos (the death drive). Here one finds the idea that art can exemplify the reconciliation of dialectical forces defining human nature and struggle. Nietzsche sees this potential emanating from the reconciliation of the Apollonian and Dionysian spirits/aesthetic qualities, exemplified in Greek tragedy. One does not overcome the other, as in Aristotle reason overcomes emotion through the process of catharsis, but they productively co-exist. By reconciling these two forces, man reconciles a duality within himself; he thereby reconciles himself to others, and to nature, because he comes to see humanity as

[20] He is also significant because the interpretations of art as dialectics which follow are themselves structured by memory, both in the sense that future aesthetic theory is influenced by a "memory" of Hegel's contribution (Marx and Nietzsche for example) and that his work itself is coloured by the cultural memory of his time (in his understanding of Asia for example).

nature's artistic creation (Nietzsche, *Birth* 37). Through this dialectical purview, Nietzsche not only returns us to the classical era; he effectively summarizes a transformation in aesthetic thought affected by the intervening centuries in so far as the Apollonian represents constricted order and the rule of law, while the Dionysion represents unbridled will and sensuous play, reconciled here in the application of free will and rational thought to the determination of an ethical world. From my vantage point this dialectic is both producer and product of cultural memory because it is inherited from human society and, as a model of reconciliation, it is inherited by social agents. It is an example of art problem solving through memory and vice versa.

Nietzsche claims even more power on behalf of art in his treatment of the Sublime as dialectical. By representing that which is Sublime, Nietzsche posits the artist is able to confront what is most overwhelming; consequently, the Sublime becomes a reflection of our capacity for courage in the face of suffering (Nietzsche, *Twilight* 530). Such courage is enabled by the illusions generated by art itself. The deceptions Plato sought to censor are here "necessary in order to live", to conquer reality through the imagination that something else is possible. Art exceeds the real—"it is worth more than truth"—because it gives us the courage [retained in memory] to change, and thereby affirm, life (Nietzsche, *Will* 453). This is why Nietzsche attributes art with making life itself possible (Nietzsche, *Will* 452) and argues that the Sublime, more than revelation or empathy, incites resistance to the denial of life (Nietzsche, *Twilight* 530). Such thought thus inaugurates a revolutionary spirit that will inform the

avant-garde movements of the twentieth century in their pursuit of a more just and meaningful world, driven by the remembrance of will. The Sublime activates cultural memory just as it is activated by it.

Karl Marx perceives the dialectical quality of art through the paradigm of materialism, which correlates art, social relations, and consciousness, lending itself to understanding the production of cultural memory through this chain of relations. As a reflection of society, art embodies society's contradictions, but may also exceed them. It has historical specificity but it also mirrors the dialectical nature of history (*Introduction to a Critique of Political Economy* 149). It is this dialectical quality of art—which is both affirmation of socially determined consciousness and consciousness-altering instrument of critique—that renders art a prominent role in revolutionary politics and social change, given the centrality of consciousness to any political project. Here, I am arguing that the dialectic of affirmation and negation is again determined by cultural memory. What is affirmed or negated, this double movement within art (every critique is also an endorsement of something other), is determined by a cultural chain of relations in memory and the result of that dialectical unfolding produces a new state of affairs to be captured by cultural memory.

A dialectical understanding of art is taken up in many ways by other theorists within the Marxist and Anarchist traditions who wrestle with art's dual capacity to alter or affirm consciousness, and the way this capacity is tied up in its relative autonomy from or imbrication in social life. Notably, Fredric Jameson identifies the

contradictions revealed by the work of art as a kind of projected resolution to social issues, which become inscribed in memory.[21] Jameson strives to develop a new hermeneutic to elicit this political dimension adherent to all artworks, however unconscious the traces of class antagonism (broadly conceived) are to be found within them. These traces are a "persistent dimension of literary and cultural texts precisely because they reflect a fundamental dimension of our collective thinking and our collective fantasies about history and reality" (*Political* 35). In this sense Jameson shows us that the work of art is explicitly rooted in social reality and in memory, especially since history and reality are only accessible to us within an aestheticized, narrative form (*Political* 35).

To what extent might such narratives also be autonomous or remote from the material world of social change? Jameson answers this ambiguity with the concept of mediation—the dialectical relationship between "the formal analysis of a work of art and its social ground, or between the internal dynamics of the political state and its economic base" (*Political* 39). I would suggest that the subjectivity of the artist/audience, which is constructed by memory, is that mediation embodied, embodied in such a way as to be potentially active and transformative, and Jameson's work on interpretation anticipates this dynamic. For Jameson, mediation reveals that the seeming separation of art from everyday life is "merely the reality of the appearance; it

[21] Art is not only informed by ideology but also productive of it "with the function of inventing imaginary or formal 'solutions' to unresolvable social contradictions" (*Political* 79). With art we "project decorative or mythic resolution of issues that [we] are unable to articulate conceptually" (*Political* 79).

exists...as the basic logic and fundamental law of our daily life and existential experience in late capitalism" (*Political* 40). However, "social life is in its fundamental reality one and indivisible" and "on that level they were never separate from one another" though this be forgotten (*Political* 40). But Jameson does not wish to argue on behalf of a homology between art and everyday life; these maintain relative autonomy. *A text's productivity (or social action) turns on this very (dialectical) ambiguity—because the subject must interpret it.* This hermeneutic approach is dialectical. Interpretation is still informed by material reality. Jameson gives us a reading of the subject's role in textual interpretation and social change. He helps us to understand relative autonomy from material conditions, how a subject can read a relatively autonomous work with relative autonomy. This is useful because it challenges the idea that there are either grand narratives tied to a false investment in materiality (no autonomy), or there is open interpretation (total autonomy). Such ideas are expressed by Jean-Francois Lyotard who writes of metanarrative, "we have paid a high enough price of the nostalgia of the whole and the one....The answer is: let us wage a war on totality" (Lyotard 82). Derrida's response is to claim that "the absence of a transcendental signified [in relation to a text] extends the domain and the interplay of signification *ad infinitum*" (Derrida 519). This false dichotomy between subjugation under meaning and meaningless does not explain how the subject can possibly affect social change, or how art can act on subjects, which a dialectical lens on aesthetic interpretation allows.

Jameson adopts a psychoanalytic terminology to describe the process of interpretation, which we can use to further clarify the mnemonic dimension of art. He recommends that as interpreters we grasp the relationship of art to society not just as reflection but, "in more active terms of production, projection, compensation, repression, displacement, and the like" (*Political* 44). With this mnemonic conception of art we alight on one more, if inadvertent, contribution to the concept of cultural memory, that memory *is a series of unconscious processes related to the fragmented psyche that characterizes human experience within late capitalism, and its preoccupation with the management of desire*. Indeed, desire remains within the work of art (as for Marcuse) a "Utopian vision of the liberation of desire and of libidinal transfiguration" essential to revolutionary social movements (*Political* 67). The revolutionary imperative is evident in our very creativity.

Marcuse picks up on this psychoanalytic strand in the *Aesthetic Dimension*, where we find the Marxist critique of the loss of memory under capitalism:

> Forgetting past suffering and past joy alleviates life under a repressive reality principle. In contrast, remembrance spurs the drive for the conquest of suffering and the permanence of joy.... If the remembrance of things past would become a motive power in the struggle for changing the world, the struggle would be waged for a revolution hitherto suppressed in the previous historical revolutions. (Marcuse 73)

Art is essential to such a revolution because, by calling on the Erotic impulse, art breaks

us from the amnesia of reification and forces critical awareness.

I have just reviewed several major arguments detailing the dialectical quality of art as its negotiation between a) the material and the spiritual (as in Hegel), b) the sensuous and the rational (as in Nietzsche), c) text and context, author and reader (as exemplified in Jameson), and d) the affirmation and negation of the reality principle (explicit in Marx and Marcuse especially). The dialectical tradition[22] in aesthetic theory has a great deal to offer the current project because it is important to understand that the dialectical tensions within art are the terrain on which memories struggle, to unite the embodied and the imagined, to affirm or negate reality, and to realize any potentiality.

Furthermore, evolutions in art theory are themselves evidence of a dialectical unfolding as a consequence of thought being shaped by memory. In other words, Hegel, Nietzsche, Marx, Jameson, and Marcuse bring related but different memory to bear on their subjects by virtue of their cultural inheritances, resulting in related but different outlooks on art's relationship to social life. Importantly, this development has a political character as it unfolds into a cultural materialist analysis in the tradition that I am reconstructing here.

By establishing that memory responds to cultural production and vice versa, that they share a dialectical method of development, I am further substantiating the claim that memory and art should be thought together as a dialectical pair resulting in the concept of "cultural memory". This approach contrasts to the dominant biological view

[22] I have not tried to capture the entire tradition here. Others, such as Lukacs and Eagleton, have been omitted because I am trying to establish a connection between memory and dialectics more than a historical overview of the dialectical tradition.

of memory and the prevalent poststructuralist view of art. Neither viewpoint would perceive its object to be in the process of becoming. From such perspectives, memory *is*, it is stored and perhaps it can be lost[23]; likewise, a work of art may be open to a variety of interpretations in play, but there is no meaning to that variation (see Derrida above). Alternatively, from the perspective of feminist cultural materialism (which I will develop in the next chapter), there is always significance to the unfolding, and a desired (though not teleologically necessary) outcome concerning the enhancement of human capacities within an anti-oppression framework of analysis.

Summary

Memory is thus a subject of much contemporary concern but is under-theorized, which this dissertation seeks to remedy. As I have established, memory is the central means of solidarity building and is therefore fraught with power struggles; representation not only contains and transmits memory, but also actualizes and incarnates it. I have here attempted to detail a definition of cultural memory through nodal points in aesthetic theory, thereby demonstrating the centrality of cultural memory to our understanding of art's social value and how exactly the arts process history. This has brought me to conclude that cultural memory facilitated through the arts can be understood as

[23] I am referring to cognitive neuroscience, for instance the Atkinson-Shiffrin model of memory which spatializes memory storage.

i) cognitive processes of reflection and integration of experiential knowledge, that compel collective and vicarious feeling, and lead to a learning by example

ii) recollection of what lay beyond the reality principle, beyond the limitations of a present state of material existence

iii) constructed knowledge in the service of political will and material advancement based on empathy, which is stimulated through a synthesis of the embodied and the intellectual modes of perception

iv) unconscious processes related to the fragmented psyche that characterizes human experience within late capitalism, and its preoccupation with the management of desire These are claims that can be put to art when we consider the cultural memory dynamic of a work. More generally, they are claims on behalf of art's political function, and explanations of how the arts activate cultural memory.

Finally, I have demonstrated that the dialectic of memory surrounds all other dialectics that are the terrain of art. I have used Hegel, Nietzsche, Marx, Jameson and Marcuse to identify many of those dialectics: the real and the ideal, Eros and Thanatos, life and death, affirmation and negation, art and society, desire and repression. The unfolding of these is determined by, and constitutes, cultural memory—what is remembered and what is forgotten. Consequently, this dialectical unfolding points toward a political principle. While Hegel initiates the dialectical understanding of art, Nietzsche informs us of its psychological impact on the subject and Marx informs us of the social implications; Jameson then subverts a postmodern dichotomy of

interpretation (i.e. grand narratives vs. open interpretation), and thereby demonstrates how subjects are activated by relative autonomy; and Marcuse gives us an expressly revolutionary interpretation of the dialectic of memory—forgetting and remembering—that is always performed by art. Through this circuit we begin to perceive the potential for art to remember life, to awaken political will, and thereby be a force of power from below.

The next chapter will explore this political principle by unpacking a concept of socialist feminism. Specifically, I will highlight the value of socialist feminism to politics, aesthetic analysis, and the concept of cultural memory, enabling me to establish and advance a socialist feminist approach to understanding art as cultural memory, before moving onto a case study that demonstrates its application in chapter 4.

Chapter 3: The Feminist Frame: A Consideration of Art's Social Value Often Excluded from Dominant Discourse

This is the last of three chapters that are intended to establish a socialist feminist aesthetic theory of cultural memory as a means of understanding art's social value. In the first chapter I explored the social value of art and argued that art's principal social value might be found in its contribution to social change. In the second chapter, I explained cultural memory's contribution to social change as a mode of dialectical struggle, and I further developed the definition of "cultural memory" by examining the mnemonic dimension of the arts. In this chapter I will develop a political analysis of that dimension, which is a way of measuring the impact of the cultural memory dialectic (inherent to art) on progressive social change. Specifically, I will spell out the value of socialist feminism to social praxis, art, and the concept of cultural memory. I undertake this argument to establish the necessity of including socialist feminism in an aesthetic theory of cultural memory, since otherwise cultural memory is politically neutral, by which I mean that it can be cultivated to affirm any kind of political project. By proposing a socialist feminist theory of cultural memory I aim to reprioritize and develop a dialectical reading of art that would be sensitive to how the arts impact social dynamics of power and oppression. This theoretical model can help us remain attune to the positive potential of aesthetics because it brings to aesthetic analysis a life-enabling politics.

Thinking Socialism & Feminism Together

I begin with the contention that feminism and socialism are a politically and intellectually essential pairing because of the material insight they offer each other. Before exploring their relationship I must first define these terms. Broadly conceived, socialism concerns itself with the mutually embedded quality of social and economic relations. It encompasses an array of philosophical branches and political projects, but on the whole it represents an analysis that perceives the impact of society on the individual and the agency of individuals in creating social systems, while critiquing the exploitative nature of capitalist economic systems. I consciously avoid employing the term "materialism" in place of "socialism", despite my affinity with cultural materialism (Williams), because of the recent tendency for theorists to employ "materialism" devoid of economic or structural analysis (e.g. thing theory, or what Teresa Ebert has termed "matterism"). Likewise, while I acknowledge my debt to the Frankfurt School, I have avoided the term "critical theory" because it has come to refer to all forms of cultural critique, as compared to the specifically Marxist analysis practiced by the Frankfurt theorists. I have chosen to use the term "socialism" to denote a specific kind of political economy analysis that identifies and rejects the logic of capitalism. I am using the term "socialism" over "Marxism" not because I believe it to be better in all cases and on all occasions, but because it offers a broader approach to aesthetics. Marxism is a form of socialism that adheres to the principle that life is determined foremost by economic systems. Socialism can prioritize equally the state,

culture, and economics.

While socialism concurs with Marxism that the mode of production is fundamental to life, and must therefore be a sustained aspect of aesthetic theory and cultural criticism, it also considers other conditions of life (e.g. patriarchy, Eros) to be significant to full human potentiality. Furthermore, art cannot be fully co-opted by capitalism for this reason; it holds life-values within it. This is essentially Marcuse's argument in The *Aesthetic Dimension.* The arts remember these life values, even when they are otherwise neglected within society at-large. Indeed, this is the revolutionary potential of art as cultural memory, as a return of the repressed under, but not confined to, capitalism. So I embrace the term "socialism" with reference to this life-affirming conception of culture and economics.

The socialist critique of capitalism is of central importance to my theory of cultural memory. Capitalist economic activity is unique because it depends upon the "private and exclusionary ownership of the means of production [i.e. land, labour and capital] for profit" (McMurtry & Reed 9). A socialist analysis assesses capitalism's failure on at least two accounts: efficiency and externalities. It is questionable whether pursuing a social good (i.e. the *raison d'être* of the marketplace) by private and exclusionary means is efficient, but capitalism is certainly inefficient if we account for the cost of externalities (such as human health and environmental degradation), which are normally excluded from the capitalist frame. A third and similar criticism is that the profit imperative creates inefficiencies and undermines social good by demanding

limitless and unsustainable growth. Finally, the dependence of profit on surplus labour value (i.e. value above and beyond owners' capital costs) institutionalizes inequality because it systematizes dependence upon the benevolence of owners to reinvest profits in the corporation and its workers, much as feudal states depend upon the benevolence of noble lords. Concurrently, (and in contradiction) the capitalist marketplace is founded upon a profoundly erroneous assumption that self-interest is the primary motive force of human behaviour.[24]

While socialism offers this critique of the oppressive nature of capitalism, it has also been criticized for failing to grasp the gendered nature of capitalism or the patriarchal basis of oppression beyond the economic system. Feminism should be linked with socialism because it is the first social theory to centrally address gendered oppression; for that reason, it can be claimed that social theory before feminism was "distorted and ideological in the sense of presenting a view of reality which masks oppression. Thus a feminist materialism is a necessary precondition for the development not only of feminist theory but of general social theory" (Hirsch, drawing on Christine Delphy, 221). A socialism without feminism is unable to perceive the scope of social relations embedded in the economic sphere. Likewise, feminism without socialism is insufficiently equipped to challenge the economic basis of power. In so far as economic and gendered social relations underwrite artistic production, they play a significant role in art's construction of cultural memory.

[24] See Wade Rowland's analysis of capitalist theory for evidence and critique of this underlying rationale, which is founded in utilitarianism, scientific rationalism and Protestantism.

I also want to assert that a socialist feminist theory can tackle the field of art with a dialectical critique of the personal and political. A dialectical critique is available through socialist feminist theory because this theoretical approach maintains that "the personal [i.e. the individuated experience of power] is always an effect of social and economic contradictions and conflicts" (Ebert 13). In chapter 1 I argued that subjectivity (which I define as the intersection of the individual and collective) is the locus of social change. A socialist feminist analysis is well positioned to access that potential for social change, given subjectivity's dependence on the personal/political dynamic, the dialectic between agency and structure.

Within art history there has been a systematic marginalization of the feminist problematic that I examine here; this marginalization is related among other factors to the development of capitalism. Patriarchy has historically disenfranchised female cultural producers by excluding them from guilds, academies, and academic curriculum (Nochlin, "Why"), but Shiner shows us how economic conditions have also served to sideline female artists. He tells us that the expanding role of the market in the eighteenth century, moving away from patronage, created competitive demand for creative genius and reinforced a division between work and home. This process relegated women to domestic labour while assigning genius and inspiration to the domain of men. Such alienation persists in the economic conditions of cultural production today since

> women are still far from equal when it comes to the art market...where the

> monetary value of their work is far lower than men's; and the male to female ratios at galleries and museums are greatly imbalanced, with few exceptions. *Women* are also often excluded from exhibitions within which one would think they would play major roles, and women curators are rarely invited to organize the more prestigious international exhibitions. (Nochlin & Reilly 19)

Given this inequality, no credible effort to change conditions within the art world—or outside of it—can afford to overlook the persistence of such a gender imbalance, nor the significance of gender-biased economic systems, with all of their wide-ranging and mutually embedded implications for the field of cultural production in general and women's lives in particular.

I do not mean to claim that feminist critique has made no impression on the arts. It has in fact played "a central role in the development of critical models of reading visual imagery in visual culture and its related disciplines of art history, film theory, television studies, and the visually oriented arms of media, new media, and cultural studies" (Jones 3). However, this influence has been primarily the effect of a 1960s-1980s surge in gender critique by theorists such as Laura Mulvey and Teresa de Lauretis, and by artists such as Judy Chicago and Louise Bourgeois. The influence of feminism on the arts has also been reduced by critiques of its monocultural essentialism.

Such critiques have led to a diversification of feminisms, many of which have become associated with identity politics, playing with the discursive construction of

identity and seeking to subvert totalizing discourses. In addition to the challenge of patriarchy and capitalism, feminism must now overcome the shortcomings of such discursively centred-strategies, which have tended to neglect a materialist critique. For example, Judith Butler and Julia Kristeva, in terms of nodal points in art theory, leave one without a way of reading art beyond the terrain of desire and its performativity, the body as text and the representation of difference. The prevalence of their approach is evidenced in celebrated, sexually explicit performances from artists such as Annie Sprinkle and Carolee Schneeman, whose work is documented along with thirteen artists of similar ilk in *Angry Women*. In this volume, bell hooks explains her own career in acutely discursive terms: "My work is almost a psychoanalytical project that also takes place in the realm of what one might call 'performance'—a lot of my life has been a performance, in a way" (79). This quote reflects the influence of psychoanalytic and performance theory on her cohort (and in-turn on their protégés), and the tendency therein to problematically conflate everyday, material existence (life) with discursive action, persona, and psychosomatic desire at the expense of materialist critique. Similarly, Chadwick notes that feminist deconstructive practices have often been conflated with a postmodern critique of discourse (382), and preoccupied with the representation of difference (400). While such discursively centred methods are imperative to the deconstruction of gender and power relations, diversifying responses to power and highlighting agency, (they generally ignore) the economic conditions of society and the possibility of social movements[25]; they are therefore limited in scope to

[25] Consider for instance Annie Sprinkle's porn work. While some of Sprinkle's work

addressing the perceptions and actions of individuals, rather than a more collective, political project. Without being able to reckon with materialism, this strategy focuses on the discursive agent as the only source of change.

The problem with a centrally discursive approach to social change, which is not unique to feminism, can be seen in critiques of Jürgen Habermas, a second generation critical theorist whose work has reinforced this linguistic turn. He has argued that discourse is the primary field of battle since communication precedes labour in the production of norms. While this is not entirely untrue, the consequent imperative for ideal speech acts limits the value of his analysis. What is required for communicative action is that all biases be first abandoned, but we know that economic bias represents a relationship to power that is not easily put down. We also know that discursively created needs cannot always be resolved discursively (e.g. I need an iPad); when it is a question of self-discipline, I may not be able to overcome my urges. Furthermore, material needs (e.g. healthcare) cannot only be resolved discursively. While dialogue, individual action, identity, performance, and the subversion of power therein are

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has contributed positively to sexual awareness, much of it has also been uncritical and inward looking. Her embrace of the porn industry has legitimated it as a site of capitalist exploitation and undermined the feminist movement's foundational investment in the idea that the personal is political because she promotes porn as a mode of individual agency and self-empowerment, as though it had no broader consequences. As a result, "she has spoken of her time in the industry as '*a learning experience: learning what I do and don't want to do, how to say No, learning what I like and what I don't like. ...I think that if I was a victim, in a sense I was just as responsible as the victimizer – that sounds harsh, but whenever that happened I'm sure I created a lot of it. So I take responsibility for any exploitation that occurred*'" (Garretson, italics original). In attempting to centre the self in this evaluation of porn, Sprinkle abandons a feminist analysis of power and its basis in the material conditions of labour.

politically important maneuvers, a structural critique addresses and enables reform of the economic base. Both approaches are necessary, but both are not equally represented within the literature and practice of feminist aesthetics.

Third wave feminism has shifted the focus, in art and elsewhere, to play, sexual power, and individual freedom, in response to the sometimes homogenizing and essentializing tendencies of second wave feminism, but it has done this at the expense of the second wave's analysis of institutional, political and economic structures, often leaving the material and collective realm of human practice unexamined.[26] The effect is not unlike that of environmental activists who concentrate on the promotion of recycling and green consumerism (i.e. what the individual can do for the environment), while accepting the structural conditions of environmental exploitation, such as economies dependent on unsustainable resources and the perpetuation of environmentally devastating war. While retrofitting my home with Energy Star products may be a wise choice, doing so does not absolve me from the necessity to oppose the tar sands through legal reform, backed by a critique of capitalist consumption. Likewise, while oppressive sexual taboos may be challenged by feminist porn and pornographic personas (see for instance Shu Lea Cheang's film *I.K.U.*, Valerie Export's *Aktionshose Genitalpanick*, and Lynda Benglis' dildo ad in *Artforumn*

[26] I am not claiming that no alternative exists; encouraging examples can be found in in Nagar and Swarr's work for instance, which examines how praxis is being undertaken through north-south collaborations between academics and non-academics. But such projects and approaches are not dominant.

1974), these do not adequately challenge, and may even reinforce, sexual violence, which is the logical result of a capitalist ethos that commodifies female bodies.

When one goes in search of a more concrete and politicized aesthetic theory, a socialist feminist aesthetic theory that would enable social transformation and empower a non-identitarian politics, one finds little beyond the Guerilla Girls' activism as a guide in the absence of other economically and historically situated modes of feminist analysis, with perhaps the lone exception of Janet Wolff. This is what motivates my effort here to establish the principles of a *socialist* feminist aesthetic theory and to demonstrate, through a case study in curatorial practice, how valuable such principles might be to the practice of art, criticism, and cultural policy.

While I prefer the term "socialism" for the reasons I have outlined above, I am necessarily drawing from Marxist aesthetic theory[27], which identifies the trace of economic relations in representation and perceives art as a reckoning with alienation under capitalism. Marxist aesthetic analysis offers us a way of understanding the relation between art and society as dialectical, but it has historically been blind to the intersectionality[28] of identity and oppression. Feminism corrects this with an intersectional politics, imperative to social change[29].

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[27] Specifically Marx, Burger, Marcuse, Jameson and Adorno

[28] Intersectionality is "the relationships among multiple dimensions and modalities of social relationships and subject formations" (McCall 1771). An intersectional analysis of oppression recognizes how differing and distinct forms of oppression are interrelated and complicated by the multiplicity of the subject.

[29] I am attributing intersectional politics to feminism because I trace it back to the efforts and ideas of feminists (e.g. bell hooks, Audre Lord, Kimberlié Crenshaw) who have engaged class and race politics with gender analysis, and have also urged feminism to be

Feminism is always useful to a critique of capitalism in particular because, even if it was not patriarchal, capitalism would continue to be an oppressive formation and feminism offers a historically grounded analysis of oppression and its intersectionality. Therefore, it is a necessary modifier to a socialist[30] political economy since socialism has not consistently encompassed anti-oppression, just as socialism is a necessary adjunct to a feminism that has not always engaged with collective struggle or the economic base.

Finally, the political necessity to take seriously the feminist paradigm is evidenced by the fact that "more girls and women are now missing from the planet, precisely because they are female, than men were killed on the battlefield in all the wars of the 20th century. The number of victims of this routine 'gendercide' far exceeds the number of people who were slaughtered in all the genocides of the 20th century" (Kristoff & WuDunn 3). This reality leaves us with little recourse but to confront the gendered dimension of political struggle. It also brings to bear, on any discourse analysis, the necessity to conceive of the material impact of discourse, through a socialist framework that renders such analysis germane. In other words, while a study of art may seem to be an indirect approach to addressing violence against women or the material conditions of life, I undertake it in the belief that the status of women and of art are intrinsically related by the logic of late capitalism, and that, at base, recognition

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cognizant of difference beyond gender. (See Anderson & Hill Collins for other examples).

[30] I am moving from Marxism to socialism here, taking Marxism to be a philosophy underlying socialist politics, which are also informed by other philosophies, such as anarchism

of this fact is necessary to their mutual advancement. Both are reduced by the expansion of the commodity-form and the ideology of identitarian exchange into social and cultural life, which suppresses difference.

In the first section of this chapter, I have argued for the value of socialist feminism in addressing the status of women and cultural production. In the following pages I will present a way of understanding the dialectical dimensions of feminism and its value for social change by providing an overview of its contributions to art and, through art, to social praxis. I will then explore the relationship between feminism and cultural memory to substantiate a feminist aesthetic theory of cultural memory. I will ultimately be able to distinguish cultural memory from discourse, as a mediator between material reality and ideology, which goes some distance to explain how conceiving of art as cultural memory empowers our understanding of its potential role in social change.

Major Contributions of Feminist Art & Criticism to Social Praxis: The Personal/*Political* Dialectic

To build a socialist feminist aesthetic theory, it is necessary to begin with a historical consciousness of feminism's contribution to art criticism and vice versa. In as much as feminism has informed cultural production, it could be argued that feminist art has served as a model for feminist thought, and as a basis for an intersectional analysis of oppression in particular. As Teresa de Lauretis has argued, an analysis of

intersectional frameworks of oppression became "inscribed" in women's cinema before it was "sufficiently focused on in feminist film theory or feminist critical practice in general" (de Lauretis 138-139). Artistic practice can be a source of innovation for social theory.

Feminist art, by which I mean art that articulates a challenge to patriarchal culture and an alliance with feminist issues, can be useful to feminist theory because art's dialectical nature facilitates the continuing and creative evolution of feminism as a theory of change. It is the dialectical character of art (outlined in chapters 1 and 2) that renders it a ground of innovation for feminist thought. Feminist art informs theory "as a mode of praxis that brings together material and thought, embodiment and knowledge" (Meskimmon 395). Consequently, feminist art theory "can speak eloquently to the wider project of feminist scholarship....in as much as feminist art theory enacts the transdisciplinary movement between ideas, objects and images, creating resonances and making new connections..." (Meskimmon 395). A central connection revealed within feminist aesthetics is that between the personal and the political, a dialectic that is key to feminist thought. I refer here to the notion, as it was originally conceived, that the domestic sphere to which women have been historically confined is not merely private and individuated but characterized intrinsically by conditions common among women because they are structured by economic relations. These economic relations in turn correspond to patriarchal ideology and in their commonality provide the basis for women's solidarity against the limited and limiting

effects of their containment. The dialectic extends further, linking the individual man's struggle with his own sense of masculinity, to social organization at-large, and so on.

Feminist artists have framed this dialectic through various means. De Lauretis suggests that the dominant themes of feminist cinema can be captured by the phrase "the personal is political":

> The gender-specific division of women in language, the distance from official culture, the urge to imagine new forms of community as well as to create new images ('creating something else to be'), and the consciousness of a 'subjective factor' at the core of all kinds of work—domestic, industrial, artistic, critical, or political work—are some of the themes articulating the particular relation of subjectivity, meaning, and experience which en-genders the social subject as female. (de Lauretis 145)

The fact that feminist art has grappled thematically with these many articulations of the personal/political dialectic indicates the wide-ranging, critical potential of the aesthetic realm.

In addition to thematic concerns, feminist art has engaged with the personal/political by attempting to develop what Hilde Hein calls an "aesthetic of experience" which seeks to avoid "adopting male language and truth claiming" (Quoted in Jensen 142). Such an aesthetic questions traditional subjects, forms and methods, which historically have objectified the female other and reproduced patriarchal myths. We see evidence of that aesthetic in feminist memorials, such as Vancouver's *Marker*

of Change or Ottawa's *Enclave*[31], which document individual women's experience of violence. These are different from traditional memorials that valorize men, either for attaining some measure of material success or for dying as combatants of war. In contrast, feminist memorials put into question the criteria for public recognition and the dynamics of war, countering soldiers and "heroes" to the objects and victims of violence. Likewise, feminist memorial makers concern themselves with *formal* innovations in the memorial/public monument genre. For instance, these works tend to employ a horizontal plane, creating meditative, gathering spaces to promote collective healing and activism, as opposed to the vertical and even phallic icons common in traditional memorials that have tended to absolve us of the responsibility to act or to actively remember by reifying social consciousness. In both form and content, feminist art has aimed to capture the specificity of personal experience and to reveal the politics of representation that normally exclude it, thereby subverting the power relations under scrutiny. This activity has served to write women into the historical record, making them visible as they had not been before within the field of representation, on their own terms.

The necessity to subvert the master's tools through aesthetic innovation stems from the extent to which "male gaze" has become implicated in representation and internalized by the female subject. This dynamic is another manifestation of the personal/political dialectic found in art criticism. It results from the gendered nature of

[31] See the Cultural Memory Group for a discussion of these and other feminist memorials.

artistic production and the reproduction of patriarchal perspectives by which the female subject is interpellated, or called into identification with a social position. Nochlin concisely articulates Laura Mulvey's theory of the gaze when she writes "there are two choices open to the woman spectator: either to take the place of the male or to accept the position of male-created seductive passivity and the questionable pleasure of masochism—lack of power to the nth degree" (Nochlin, *Women* 30). Nochlin adds, "this positioning of course offers an analogue to the actual status of women in the power structure of the art world—with the exception of the privileged few" (Nochlin, *Women* 30). The claim here is that since women are interpellated by patriarchal representations of women, they are prepared to reproduce a patriarchal power dynamic through false consciousness.[32]

Despite this reproductive dynamic, feminist art has also revealed that gender is susceptible to counter-construction by discourse. As de Lauretis explains,

> the construction of gender goes on today through the various technologies of gender [e.g. cinema] and institutional discourses [e.g. theory] with power to control the field of social meaning and thus produce, promote, and 'implant' representations of gender. But the terms of a different construction of gender also exist, in the margins of hegemonic discourses (de Lauretis 18).

The constructed quality of gender makes room for the deconstruction of discursive patriarchy through artistic practices that pursue "the deaestheticization of the female

[32] The structure and management of arts institutions, the very mechanisms of collective representation, also become cites of patriarchal reproduction as a result of people occupying institutional roles. I will consider this problem further in chapter 5.

body, the desexualization of violence, the deoedipalization of narrative, and so forth" (de Lauretis 146). For de Lauretis, feminist art constitutes not a feminist aesthetic but a feminist deaesthetic[33], a deconstructive practice such as is performed by Orlan in her confrontation with cosmetic surgery. By exploring socially relative forms of female beauty, this artist enters into the abject and grotesque—her own surgical deformation—which not only problematizes cultural "universals", but forces us to witness their inherent violence.

Perhaps what Orlan's practice best illustrates is that a feminist, deconstructive analysis, which concerns itself with cultural representation, can also transcend discursive critique by revealing the susceptibility of art to bias and the material implications of that bias through material intervention. Consequently, it establishes or re-privileges the relationship between art and social change by challenging assumptions of art's disinterestedness (Wark 28). We cannot assume that the arts occupy a separate realm since they are in fact affected by social power dynamics. A conception of art that

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[33] This term is similar to Hal Foster's postmodern "anti-aesthetic" which questions the categories of taste and universality. It is also "sensitive" to alternative, marginal aesthetic practice "engaged in a politic" (Foster xv). But the term differs somewhat from de Lauretis' concept since she is writing specifically about undoing the objectification of women's bodies. This can be done in a way that challenges traditional aesthetic vernacular and categories. However, de Lauretis addresses the inherent risk of reproducing oppressive frameworks through opposition, emphasizing instead aesthetic attempts to actively *deconstruct* patriarchy from within. She seeks to revise narratives of coherence but—unlike Foster, who embraces *differance* and claims that "we are never outside representation or its politics" (Foster xv)—de Lauretis wants to do so by foregrounding the contradiction defining the feminist subject as "both inside and outside the ideology of gender" (de Lauretis 114), as extra-discursive.

masks gender politics obstructs art's capacity to gain social status through social engagement. A politically engaged conception of art is a necessary if insufficient condition to restore art's social status. Perhaps the chief contribution of feminism to art, and of feminist art to social life, is located in this capacity of the personal/political dialectic to empower art's relationship to everyday life by revealing (through thematic exploration and formal innovation, as well as theories of the gaze and counter discourse), that the arts are susceptible to gender bias, having political impact on private lives and politically amplifying private lives.

I do not mean that the intersection of the self and the social order had not been theorized prior to feminism. There is a long history of related, identitarian politics (Ghandi and Marx are examples). But the feminist movement can be credited with crystallizing and popularizing the idea that the personal is political, and it is a movement as old or older than others that convey a similar analysis (such as postcolonialism or modern sociology). I do not aim to privilege one movement over another but rather to highlight, especially in the aesthetic field, how feminism has played a leading critical role. As Jayne Wark explains, "from the conventional Leftist focus on classes and masses, feminism shifted the focus to a concept of the political as emerging from and merging with the personal. In this way, feminist artists enabled the kind of direct engagement between art and the politics of everyday life that had seemed so daunting to their male peers at the time" (Wark 5). To this extent, it behooves us to remember the unique quality of a feminist perspective, which is why I have identified

some of the central achievements of feminist aesthetic theory, highlighting the contribution of feminist thought to aesthetics and of feminist aesthetics to social thought.

Ultimately, I want to argue that while the rift between art and everyday life has been navigated by the personal/political dialectic, realizing that dialectic depends on the function of cultural memory, not simply discourse, as a bridge. Consequently, a feminist *cultural memory* analysis enables us to understand art's potential to influence social change beyond discourse.

Feminism, Art and Memory

First, let us consider feminisms' association with cultural memory. The chief contribution of feminism to the development of cultural memory has been its analysis of the personal/political dialectic under patriarchy. In fact,

> one of the more intensive and extensive memory projects is that prompted by the feminist critique of patriarchy. Starting with the idea that women had been largely excluded from the historical record and extending this idea to the still-to-be record of contemporary life, feminist writers and scholars set out first to document women's experiences, women's perspectives, and women's roles. Whether the field be art, literature, music, science, or politics, the task is to retrieve what had been lost, to reevaluate what had been present.... What has been provided by the numerous investigations is the informational base on which

collective memory can be restructured. (Zarecka 133-134)

By representing individual lives with regard to their social conditions and contributions, feminism has sought to rehabilitate cultural memory, or make it more inclusive, through a revamped historical record and folk familiarity with women's voices. This activity extended new historicism's enfranchisement of social history by giving particular attention to the gendered nature of historigraphy. This movement has contributed to the concept of cultural memory as *a collective understanding of private lives, embedded in cultural life, or as the meeting of personal and political identifications facilitated by cultural media.*

Given the investment of feminism in cultural memory, it is not surprising that feminist art commonly concerns the propagation of personal memory as political agent, and the personal internalization of socially held and politically infused memories. A feminist art preoccupation with memory is evident in a special edition of *Matriart* (1996), the United Kingdom's "Textures of Memory" exhibition[34] (Hamlyn), and academic articles such as Renee Baerts' "Materializing Memory: The Clothing Works of Faye HeavyShield". Writing of HeavyShield's work, Baert effectively summarizes what can be said generally concerning the cultural memory work of feminist art: these works

> serve to anchor collective remembering, and in doing so to counter a dominant representational regime that places marginalized identities under erasure....

[34] This exhibition was a curatorial partnership between Pennera Barnett and Pamela Johnson, and featured seven artists from the UK, Canada and the USA. It was shown at Angel Row in Nottingham, London's Pitshanger, and Birmingham's Mac (Hamlyn 40).

> Yet...these works, founded upon memory, are neither held in the orbit of the past nor seek to 'transcend' its travails. Rather, they materialize memory and its capture within the body with great power even as they create, through material and form, metaphoric 'spaces' of renewal and possibility. (Baerts 49, italics original)

The materialism of art both is, and represents the potential of a real transformation in the material realm as an effect of representation rooted in memory and its production. This is the case in the materialism of the work of art, which externalizes memory, and in the potential of that externalization to work upon the bodies of its audience who, as actors in the world, might bring its effects forward in conscious conduct.

Further demonstrating the prevalence of cultural memory as a common, dialectical discourse within feminism, Pollock and Sauron suggest that "the past, whether in the form of visual or literary culture, myth or personal history or trauma, interacts with the present in the formation of a space both deeply personal to the creative artist, writer or academic but also able to negotiate much wider questions" of social and political significance (Pollock & Sauron 5). This duality leads me to conclude that, in effect, the dialectic of memory (past/present) corresponds with the feminist dialectic (personal/political). Personal memory (the past) can be incorporated into collective consciousness (the political present) and vice versa. In this sense the project of feminism is a cultural memory project.

In the remainder of this chapter, I wish to argue that the mutual investment of

feminism and cultural memory is also a basis for grounding each in the material because each grounds the other in the experience of women's lives and in their transformation. Here I will be distinguishing cultural memory from discourse by developing a chain of relations between material reality, memory, and discourse.

Memory as Material

Cultural memory can be understood to have a material dimension, or be relevant to materialism, in at least two closely related ways: first, through its aesthetic and sensory dimensions and second, through its mediation between discourse and material reality enabled by its aesthetic and sensory dimensions. I will examine the first claim with reference to the work of Catriona Sandilands, Susannah Radstone, and Jill Bennett to establish a basis for the second claim.

We can understand memory as material in so far as it derives from and is stimulated by our physical interaction with the world around us. As Sandilands explains,

> both the written page and the storied landscape are warehouses of memory that are external to the individual body...the fact remains that the act of remembering involves a recognition of a relationship between the body/mind and the external world that is not only determined by internal forces. The experience of memory is thus always already social, technological, and physical in that the conditions of

> the relationship between brain and object cannot help but be located in a complex range of conditions that offer the subject to the experience, and experience to the subject. (Mortimer-Sandliands 274)

Memory is not merely internal; it is also experiential because it is stimulated by the physical world. Through Sandilands' analysis, we can perceive that memory exceeds the individual intellect because it is externally mediated. This is a useful way of relating memory to the material world, but it is limited because it suggests that memory does not exceed the signs which store memory, and is therefore still seemingly akin to discourse, although these signs have a material manifestation. The distinction between the material and the discursive is not clear. So while memory may be impacted by the physical world, this alone cannot explain how memory might have material impact or how it might be distinct from discourse.

Radstone moves memory away from discourse when she posits that it draws on the "felt knowledge of one's own history and cultural formation" (13), which might be liberatory because it enables the transformation of identity. This theory begins to more clearly distinguish memory from discourse because emotion (i.e. Radstone's "felt knowledge) is pre or post-discursive. Discourse can participate in creating emotions, but one can experience emotions regardless of whether or not one has a discourse through which to make emotions meaningful. This is at least a non-discursive, if not a material, understanding. So, through Radstone, we can begin to conceive of memory as more than discursive.

Bennett's work takes our conception of memory closer to materialism in her analysis of art associated with trauma. She investigates contemporary visual art such as film, theatre, and sculpture that is relational because it is not concerned so much with a particular subject's interior condition as it is with the extension of trauma in space and time, the translation of post-traumatic memory from interior to exterior (Bennett 12). These works rely on the transaction of sensation rather than the communication of personal experience, to leads us "toward a conceptual engagement with the work" through sensory experience, rather than a more reductive "emotional identification or sympathy" (Bennett 7). The intellectual shock of such work generates within the audience an empathetic memory that compels critical inquiry rather than the appropriation or objectification of others' experience or an over-concentration on the artist's subjective experience. It does not rely on the shock of violent imagery but on the more enduring impression of trauma's after effects. Both the individual and collective memory can thereby be sustained. Neither need annihilate the other. In fact, they inform one another. This dialectic is fertile and irresolvable. It moves us past capitalist preoccupation with individual experience (i.e. consumer choice, libertarian ethics, identitarian politics) as opposed to the relational, and it resonates with historical arguments concerning art as a dialectical engagement of the embodied and the intellectual, which I have argued in chapter 1 is key to our understanding of art's social value. As both an intellectual and embodied entity, arising from the meeting of sensorial perception and intellectual reflection, memory relates the discursive to the

non-discursive at the level of the individual. But Bennett demonstrates how this engagement between the body and mind expands outside of subjective experience to become relational and shared through sensory experience. Art is a *relational*[35] means of engendering memory that renders it "a political rather than a subjective phenomenon" because the memory materially extends, spatially and temporally, in the work of art and in the bodies of its audience (Bennett 12). This is what for Bennett constitutes art's "empathic vision" which "understands or enacts the political as a sphere of interconnection, in which subjectivities are forged and sustained, but within which new links might be traced between subjects and places with only limited experience in common" (Bennett 21). Therefore, the extent to which art embodies and incites sensory, experiential memory (which is material in the first sense) through reception implicates it in not only personal memory, but in collective memory of political importance because it is the basis for material action.

I want to expand on this notion of the material impact of memory to argue that, through its sensory capacity to evoke empathic vision, cultural memory essentially

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[35] While Bennett calls this kind of work an "aesthetics of relations" (21) she does not reference Bourriaud's "relational aesthetics". What Bennett describes is closely related to Bourriaud's characterization of artwork that represents or prompts social relations (Bourriaud 112) but Bourriaud's concept is broader than Bennett's. Bennett is interested specifically in the transaction of the sensation of trauma. Another difference between these two approaches to the relational is in their perception of art's political potential. For Bennett, empathic vision is actively political by virtue of engendering critical insight" into the experience of others (Bennett 152). For Bourriaud, aesthetic relationalism is political in so far as it challenges the reduction of social relations within a privatized and automated social context (Bourriaud 17). I have chosen to write about Bennett rather than Bourriaud because her work is centrally concerned with affect, or how a work can "transcribe sense memory into common memory" (Bennett 29) to develop audiences' understanding of issues.

mediates between discourse and the material world in a way that explains the impact of discourse on the construction of actual truths and material practices. In other words, memory mediates between past, present and future experience, and between reality (past and present) and the discursive (in which the future exists). It therefore writes the future and translates through discourse into the material reality that unfolds. This is different from praxis, which is the product of the synthesis of discourse and action, rather than a mediator between the two. Variations in material reality, which exists outside of discourse, lead to changes in discourse over time via memory.

For example, imperialist practices combine with religious fundamentalism to produce a discourse concerning the prevalent threat of terrorism; or an earthquake hits Haiti, and this begins to re-enter Haiti into cultural memory, manifesting in a discourse concerning poverty. This is not to claim that the memory is permanent, or singular. However, the circuit of connection—material-memory-discourse-material-memory-discourse—is ongoing and bi-directional, so that *when a discourse* (e.g. capitalism as freedom) *becomes congealed in memory it shapes material reality* (e.g. the free expansion of capitalism), *and memory also transforms material reality* (e.g. racial discrimination) *into discourse* (e.g. "racism"). The chain of relations I propose here develops the concept of cultural memory with an explicit understanding of its material impact and distinction from discourse that is lacking in the literature. Cultural memory is not only stored in the material realm; it produces material conditions and generates discourse from the material. This chain of relations grounds our understanding of art's

social value in a materialist framework, thereby addressing a lacuna of materialism in the critical scholarship around discourse and the politics of aesthetics.

Donald F. Bouchard seems to capture this chain of relations in microcosm when he writes about Foucauldian theory in his introduction to *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*. His title signifies the chain of relations between the human sciences (language), modern literature (counter-memory) and social life (practice), a chain that Bouchard employs to characterize Foucault's work. However, for Bouchard the meaning of counter-memory is found only in what is absent—as for Foucault the meaning of texts is found in the social milieu external to them, or for Nietzsche in the oppressed will. Consequently, Foucault concerns himself with identifying and categorizing absented discourses as an array of differences, without evaluating them from a material standpoint. Specifically, he does not consider, as I will, the economic conditions of cultural production, and the myriad historical voices and political projects contingent upon them. This limitation also compromises his historical trajectory. Whereas I wish to argue that the cultural memory making capacity of art extends throughout the dialectic of history, and is not just an advent of modernism, for Foucault a counter-memory of alternative sexuality, for instance, only becomes possible in the modern period, following the disruption of power dynamics by revolutionary events.

In summary, I have argued that cultural memory is used and produced by discourse and is not interchangeable with it. Cultural memory is congealed discourse—

what discourse must become before it can translate into material reality[36], and it is material reality becoming discourse. This is what distinguishes Bennett's concept of sense memory from the general, discursive idea of memory narratives, and renders it another dimension of art's social value. For instance, writing of Doris Salcedo's work, Bennett claims that the work of art enables an "enactment of the sense memory—or trauma. Thus, it is not simply the nature of the object that is important (as is the case with the knife that evokes pain) but the fact of its transformation, its subjection to the process of remaking, its 'becoming strange.'...[This] transformation testifies not to a singular experience but ...to the cyclical nature of the violence" (Bennett 67). Here it seems to me that cultural memory transforms the material (knife) into discourse (violence). Bennett views this transformation as political not in terms of the passive representation of political propositions, but in so far as it actively engenders critical thought by producing "embodied perception" that can "shift perspective" (Bennett 152). As an analytic tool of materialism then, cultural memory, which finds a vehicle in art, is a useful means of explaining how discourse and the non-discursive engage with and respond to one another.

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[36] For example, the criminal tendencies of immigrants is a discursive notion that becomes an increasingly prevalent reality when it is internalized as memory by people who a) create social structures (such as under-funded schools and exploitative employment) that push immigrants toward crime through resource deprivation or b) begin to see themselves as criminal, as a consequence of narrativization, and therefore become prone toward actual criminal activity. This movement from discourse to material truth is essentially Foucault's knowledge/power concept, although he omits articulation of the intermediary—cultural memory.

A common critique of discourse theory (as noted above) is that it fails to adequately account for or address material existence. Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman comment on the need to bridge discourse and material reality when they note a self-contradictory tendency within postmodern discourse theory as a result of its over-investment in the linguistic:

> Although postmoderns claim to reject all dichotomies, there is one dichotomy that they appear to embrace almost without question: language/reality....they have rejected one side and embraced the other. Even though many social constructionist theories grant the existence of material reality, that reality is often posited as a realm entirely separate from that of language, discourse, and culture. This presumption of separation has meant, in practice, that feminist theory and cultural studies have focused almost entirely on the textual, linguistic, and discursive. (Alaimo & Hekman 2-3)

I argue that cultural memory heals that separation. It provides within the human psyche the material basis necessary for social action because it navigates the dialectic of embodied and intellectual experiences. It provides a way of thinking about materialism without conflating it with discourse. It explains the transmission between them while leaving them distinct from each other.

Sandilands demonstrates the bridging potential of memory when she reflects on Alzheimer's erasure of memory: "memory ties together bodies and landscapes in ways that reveal the inextricable connection between physicality and reflection and also the

ways in which different types of memory combine to enable (or not) socially sanctioned and culturally meaningful interactions with the more-than-human world" (Mortimer-Sandilands 271). Alzheimer's illustrates that the absence of memory negates discourse, makes it incomprehensible, and still the subject suffers because suffering is not discourse-dependent. Suffering is a material reality, but it is mediated by memory in so far as memory determines the possibilities of dominant discourse, how we respond to suffering and what we know about it—our political will. The subject needs discourse to orient her to the world and to resolve her suffering, but that orientation is not possible without memory.

The concept of cultural memory is also unique and valuable if distinguished from discourse because it accounts for changes in dominant discourse and the emergence of alternative discourses. For instance, consider Alaimo and Hekman's claim that

> the strength of postmodern feminism is to reveal that since its inception, western thought has been structured by a series of gendered dichotomies. Postmodern feminists have argued that the male/female dichotomy informs all the dichotomies that ground western thought: culture/nature, mind/body, subject/object, rational/emotional, and countless others. Postmodern feminists have further argued that it is imperative not to move from one side of the dichotomy to the other, to reverse the privileging of concepts, but to deconstruct the dichotomy itself, to move to an understanding that does not rest on oppositions. (Alaimo & Hekman 2)

This accreditation of dialectical thought to postmodernism is evidence of a memory being constructed by postmodern discourse. This new memory overrides any memory of a historical discourse of dialectics and the dialectical critique forwarded by second wave feminism. The prevalence of postmodern theory proves the need for a theory of cultural memory that reveals how competing discourses are remembered or forgotten.

It is also important to understand the mediation of memory as distinct from discourse because of the extent to which privileging discourse risks compromising feminist politics. A fundamental presupposition of discourse theory is that there is no meaning outside of discourse, given the absence of a transcendental signifier (Hall 45). What does this mean for a feminist politics? It creates a problem of identifying oppression as a moral wrong. One could disagree, on the basis that not all meanings are equally valid and therefore a moral system can be supported by discourse, but if there were no meaning outside of discourse, there would be no basis for the determination of a discourse's validity; there would be no grounds for a moral system. So, in reality, how do we determine that oppression is objectionable? The answer is in the repetition of experience, known via memory: the reality of deprivation does not change much over time—people suffer, poverty is bad for your health—these are rational and empirical norms, underlying moral judgment, that are neither culturally relative nor discursively dependent. The postmodernist engagement with discourse, like the modernist critique of ideology and hegemony, is indispensible, but feminism must remain grounded in historical materialism to be transformative (Ebert 38).

Consequently, I do not merely aim to create a discourse about cultural memory, since cultural memory itself is politically neutral. Rather, I am *attempting to embed a socialist feminist critique in an aesthetic theory of cultural memory* and to use the cultural memory concept as an analytic tool within a socialist feminist theory.

A crucial component of a critique grounded in historical materialism has not yet been adequately addressed and that is a component that *expands over* the material-memory-discourse chain of relations—the economic. The economic dimension of a socialist feminist aesthetic theory entails examining the economic conditions that determine which discourses and which material realities become memories. Like memory, economics are both material and discursive; economics is about the experience of wealth or poverty *and* the ideological narrative of economic systems. From both directions, economics powerfully influence which memories take hold.

In the introduction to this chapter I indicated that the lack of economic analysis in contemporary feminist art criticism invites the development of a socialist feminist aesthetic theory. I will turn to Ebert now for a cogent argument on behalf of a materialist framework for feminism that properly encompasses a critique of capitalism. I will discuss her work as a means of further clarifying memory's difference from discourse, its relation to materialism, and its consequent capacity to serve as a central and necessary component of a socialist feminist aesthetic.

Essentially, Ebert is concerned that postmodernism's influence on feminist politics has given too much attention to agency at the expense of structure because it

fails to critique the structural relations of production. This theory as play, in Ebert's terms, evades the material conditions of cultural production because it "addresses itself exclusively to cultural politics as the theater of significations, resignification (Butler), remetaphorization (Cornell), and redescription (Rorty)...". Ebert argues that this dominant, theoretical paradigm has replaced dialectical critique with "desire/pleasure as the dynamics of the social" (ix Ebert). Consequently,

> in place of a historical materialist analysis for social change, feminists are provided with models for "the care of the self," for "power feminism," and for "sexual-agency feminism," all of which trivialize the situation of women: reducing it to matters of textuality, desire, or voluntarism.
>
> ...as if women's experience (whether understood empirically or topologically) is...severed from larger socioeconomic practices. (x; xii Ebert)

I posit that the concept of cultural memory can be a useful tool in reparations. It *mediates between the experience of structure and the possibility of agency in so far as memories are both personal and collective*; memory is determinant, but we have agency to change collective memory through personal memory, and vice versa. Moreover, the critique of the structural relations of production is only possible through the mediation of cultural memory because it allows for a recognition and rearticulation of agents' experience under capitalism as morally valid (given memory's relation to material reality), and not merely another discourse.

The dominance of postmodern discourse has established not no memory but one

that constructs a memory world conducive to patriarchal capitalism by ignoring the relations of production.[37] A transformative cultural politics depends on displacing the central role accorded discourse in favour of the material-memory-discourse triad I have proposed. This move attempts to undo the homogenizing effect of discursivity as a dominant critical tool.

Ebert makes the point that in common parlance, "discourse" has already displaced "ideology" (of which it is properly a vehicle),

> a move undertaken in order to replace social contradictions (explained by ideology) with social 'difference': a concept that isolates differences in a locality and cuts its relations to other differences and, most importantly, to the cause of difference [economic power]. In so doing, it renders all differences the same. Ironically, difference, which is instituted to free us from universalizing concepts, itself ends up a neouniversalist regime. (Ebert 8)

If we conflate memory with discourse, we affirm and reproduce this error because the conflation erases memory's capacity to facilitate the critique of capitalism as both discourse and material practice.

Memory is also distinct from ideology since a system of ideas (i.e. ideology) is distinct from its material impetus and impact, and from their recollection. Ideology is expressed in discourse; memory is how discourse is experienced and embedded. So in

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[37] This assertion complements Jameson's argument that postmodernism reflects and enables the cultural logic of late capitalism because, through the ahistoricism of pastiche, fragmentation and depthlessness, it obscures alienation under capitalism.

the case of Christian ideology, the discourse differs according to different factions (e.g. Protestant vs. Catholic), reflecting the always-potential variability of interpretation. However, the variations of discourse are also informed, and partially explained by, variations within cultural memory.

Cultural memory gives discourse a bearing. Consequently, an analysis of the discursive, in this case the arts, as a source and expression of cultural memory enables us to understand art's capacity to alter the relations of labour via consciousness because memory is itself dialectical and historically rooted; *it forges a link between the personal and collective and that in itself is an act against the dominant, capitalist mode of production* since capitalism relies upon a disjuncture between the personal and the collective, between agency and structure. It relies on collective labour to exist but is ideologically opposed to collective agency, advocating instead the individual pursuit of profit and individual freedom from the collective through the marketplace. For this reason capitalism idealizes the individual experience of consumption, which masks the social relations of production and the exploitative extraction of surplus labour value. Consequently, "Capitalism has always privileged experience because the logic of experience (local and individualistic) distracts critical inquiry and transformative action away from the system of capital" (Ebert 20). For example, in capitalism the experience of rape "becomes a matter between two persons and not the historically inevitable practices of power in a system that is founded upon the exploitation of the many for the benefit of the few" (Ebert 20). In contrast, feminist art can translate the individual

experience of rape back into the social and systemic framework by collectivizing it as cultural memory, which in turn generates feminist discourse. This is not merely a discursive gesture because such a work of art does not simply give a victim voice or transform rape into the terrain of sexual power play, but corrects a fundamental logic underlying capitalism. In this regard, it at least awakens a critical discourse with potentially material implications for the subversion of capitalism.

However, art criticism can take that one step further by explicitly re-embedding the economic in our analysis. A political economy critique aimed at socio-economic transformation should be part of an aesthetic theory concerning feminist cultural memory. The economic component of socialist feminist aesthetic theory entails examining the economic conditions that influence which discourses and which material realities become memories. (My next chapter will demonstrate such an analysis.)

Ultimately, economics, not desire, stands behind cultural memory. Indeed, "all needs, including sexuality and nutrition, are material, which is another way of saying that economic practices are the condition of possibility for all other human practices" (Ebert 47). Not all material practices are themselves economic (e.g. sexuality) but all are dependent on economic activity. Even one's sexuality is limited or enabled by one's access to resources otherwise in short supply, such as food, healthcare, and shelter; the ability to freely determine the nature of one's sexual activity and one's sexual partners is also impacted by economic need variously.

It is important to note that by "economics" I am not referring only to capitalism

and thereby reifying the category of the material. This is the mistake made by capitalists and by some anti-capitalist activists. My definition of the economic is "the efficient production, distribution, and consumption of goods otherwise in short supply" (McMurtry, *Living* 8). This definition is broad because it categorizes almost all, human activity to produce anything, as economic activity. The only limit on it is that goods must be in short supply, which means that labour is required to produce them. Overconsumption and waste do not qualify as economic goods because they require almost no labour, which is also why there is no shortage of them. The mistake of postmodern critics like Julie Graham and Katherine Gibson in attempting to reframe the economic, is that they make all economic activity synonymous with capitalism, suggesting its libratory potential by "redefining" it. This is a misleading discursive deconstruction that in no way challenges what capitalism actually is.

I am also not arguing that memory is resolutely determined by capitalism. In fact, the discourse and practice of capitalism is antithetical to memory since, as Adorno explains,

> All of bourgeois society stands under the law of exchange, of the 'like for like,' of calculations which leave no [recognized] remainder. By its very nature, exchange is something atemporal [i.e. not historically conditioned: price is always, for all time, economically true because it is dictated by the market]..... But this means no less than that memory, time and recollection are liquidated as a kind of irrational remnant. (qtd. in Bürger 59)

Capitalism masks the historical activity of labour in its valuation of commodities. Given the antagonism of capitalism to memory, one could posit that cultural memory can be a challenge to capitalism in that it is able to question absolute truths, of which capitalism appears as one.

In chapter 4 and 5, I will begin to undertake such a challenge by reconstructing the work of Charlotte Salomon and the economic environment surrounding its exhibition in Canada. The value of analyzing Charlotte Salomon's work lies in what it reveals about the concept of socialist feminist cultural memory and how that concept can be a useful means of accounting for the relations of production. I will argue that a feminist cultural memory is suppressed in this exhibition as a consequence of capitalist discourse impinging on its presentation. This will reveal more than has typically been discussed by scholars about the form and content of the work itself, while considering not merely the consciousness of subjects reading the work, but the material conditions of its production. By turning memory studies toward this kind of analysis, I hope to have enhanced its usefulness. It need not remain merely a mode of discursive critique. By positioning cultural memory as the lynchpin between discourse and reality, and by promoting its application to the relations of cultural production rather than merely the consumptive experience of artwork, I am aiming to reconnect critiques of cultural practices and significations to their economic conditions, thereby fulfilling Ebert's call for a materialist feminism.

Chapter 4: *Life? or Theatre?* as Feminist Cultural Memory

The Berlin born Charlotte Salomon completed *Life? or Theatre?* in 1942, while living on the estate of the American Ottilie Moore in southern France. Moore's villa made a temporary home for many Jewish refugees. Salomon had migrated there from Berlin in 1939, following Kristallnacht. She remained there, first with her grandparents and later with her husband, until October 1943. She was then deported to Auschwitz where she was killed in the gas chambers soon after her arrival. Her father, a surgeon, and her stepmother, an opera singer, had been in hiding in Holland during the war, and they later recovered some of her work. Salomon had dedicated *Life? or Theatre?* to Moore, who returned it to her parents in 1947. It appeared in a series of exhibitions beginning in 1959, and in 1971 Salomon's parents donated the work to the Jewish Historical Museum in Amsterdam, where her archive remains. It has inspired numerous international exhibitions, books, conferences, plays and films. Some of her work has been incorporated into the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial in Jerusalem, and portions remain on permanent display in Amsterdam.

The first curator to mount an exhibition of Charlotte Salomon's *Life? or Theatre?* called it a "unique work, with nothing else of its conception and size in art history" (Lowenthal Felstiner, *To Paint* 224). This exceptional body of expressionist visual art consists of 1658 pieces, including 1263 gouaches, 289 of which have a

painting on the verso side, and 395 transparencies.[38] The transparencies were originally attached to the gouaches by tape on one edge, suggesting that the whole formed a kind of bookwork of layered imagery and text (in German); Salomon even indicates chapter divisions in some locations. Typically the pieces are now framed individually or in small groups to convey their serial quality, and they are wall hung with accompanying textual translations.

Salomon assigned the work's various components to three narrative categories: a prelude, a main section and an epilogue, as in a play. This play primarily conveys a semi-fictional representation of Salomon's life. Its characters represent the actual people she has known although their names are altered. Explanatory and often rhyming text, painted or penciled by hand, appears on the transparencies or on the gouaches themselves, alongside or overlapping images. As we watch Salomon's character mature throughout the early 20th century, we witness the privileged conditions of her upbringing, her experience of education and travel, her artistic travails, and her family's displacement during the Second World War.

A central subject within the narrative is the suicides of several women in Salomon's family. This has a structural impact on the work as the subject both opens and closes the play. However, an equally absorbing and counterbalancing concern is Salomon's love affair, both thrilling and tortuous, with an older man who ostensibly

[38] December 9, 2011 email communication with Anton Kras of the Jewish Historical Museum of Amsterdam. The most recent publication of the work, which I will refer to throughout this chapter, includes "769 gouaches, thirteen painted pages of text and one transparency" (Salomon 4).

encourages her as an artist. He is the central figure of the work's main section, which documents his infatuation with Salomon's step-mother, Salomon's infatuation with him, his opinions of her work and character, his philosophies, his character flaws, and the tumultuous and erotic moments of their affair. Salomon writes that he has a "profound subconscious fascination for her" (Salomon 479). He is a voice teacher, veteran, and writer preoccupied with aesthetic theories of redemption. She engages with his theories throughout the main section and the epilogue, as she grapples with a legacy of familial crisis and multifarious sources of alienation—as a subordinate family member, as an artist struggling for achievement, as an unrequited lover, and as a Jewish exile. The narrative resolves in her decision to embrace the kind of aesthetic revitalization envisioned by her lover. She transcends alienation and trauma, both personal and political, by undertaking this very work of art rather than succumbing to emergent, suicidal despair. Consequently, Salomon shows us that she has wrestled between the tragedy of life and the creativity of drama, between the creative resilience of life, and the tragic drama of theatre, and that she finds a dialectical resolution therein.

Just as the work's title and narrative content point to the ambiguity between life and performance, its composition captures the multisensory, theatrical nature of everyday life. *Life? or Theatre?* presents an extensive array of surreal images, akin to an illustrated manuscript, storyboard or film reel in some sense but much more expansive, layered and integrated. Salomon labeled it a *Singspiel*, referencing an 18th century genre of opera with spoken dialogue. This accounts for her inclusion of

dialogue in the text, and musical quotations, as well as the montage quality of the images, all of which aim to capture a potential, theatrical performance in two dimensions. The effect is sometimes comedic, sometimes anguished. The *Singspiel* is indeed a genre very little removed from life since it is a form of musical theatre that employs popular music, stories of the middle class, and vernacular language. Vitality springs from the work as a whole, even though many of the images portray isolation, distress, and obsession. Its vivid, diverse, and often muddy pigments bleed off the page. Its restless lines and rhyming language overlap imprecise, energetic images, creating layers that reveal and conceal. The spontaneity and intensity of these elements convey an unalienated labour process; the artist's labouring body and the immediate use-value of the work as a kind of psychoanalysis, as an exploration of memory, emanates from its sensate materiality.

In this chapter, I want to consider *Life? or Theatre?* to be a kind of cultural memory work to gain fresh insight into the work itself and to analyze its reception by critics, while demonstrating the analytical potential of the concept of cultural memory that I have developed in preceding chapters. *Life? or Theatre?* can be understood as cultural memory work because it draws substantively on the memory landscape of the artist's life, and translates her recollections into a representation that is communicable. In this sense, it fulfills my first definition of cultural memory as *a cognitive process of reflection and integration of experiential knowledge, that compels collective and vicarious feeling, and leads to a learning by example*. Its heterogeneous composition

enables it to shape or produce memory, as opposed to being merely documentary or representative. As Steinberg explains, "the distinction between recovered history and recovered memory [in *Life? or Theatre?*] is produced aesthetically, through its elaborate juxtapositions and differentiations of genre (image, music, text), temporalities, and voice (autobiography, history, fantasy)" (Steinberg 3). In this way it inculcates the sensual, visceral and associative qualities of lived memory. The work essentially organizes and constructs a private memory in the mind of its artist and it becomes, as it were, a talking cure because of its formulation as representation, as communication for another. This leads Ernst Van Alphen to speculate that "Salomon's work can be seen or read not so much as controlled narration, but as an effort to master trauma by embedding the re-enactment of death, of dead family members, into a controlled action of narration.... It is by means of the narrative technique of embedding that the trauma is healed, is transformed into a memory which can be told and shown to others" (Van Alphen, "Giving" 116). The formal breadth and hybridity of the work enables this process of reintegration by creating a heterogeneous space in which anxieties can be variously expressed, sublimated and transformed. Here we see that *Life? or Theatre?* takes on the fourth dimension of my cultural memory definition as *a series of unconscious processes related to the fragmented psyche that characterizes human experience and its preoccupation with the management of desire*. This process is both enacted and documented by the work itself, since Salomon employs *Life? or Theatre?* in exorcising various relational and artistic frustrations. Likewise, Salomon's

practice of dislocating popular and classical cultural references from German society, and relocating them in her work, can be understood as "an attempt to reappropriate the culture that had displaced and excluded her" (Schmetterling 123), thereby reasserting her agency in the matter of her own cultural location and identity.

Salomon's conscious interpenetration of diverse and oppositional forms, made visible in-part by the collision of past, present and future within the work, reveals the disruptive and transformative potential of the interstitial space she occupies, the potential to transform the binary or seemingly fixed polarities structuring Salomon's work and world (e.g. male/female, German/exile, civilized/suicidal, artist/amateur, woman/child, secular/religious). The work is in this sense deeply dialectical and reflects/informs the theory of cultural memory I am developing here. Memory is a dialectical enterprise, the result of a negotiation between past and present, between immediate sensory experience and intellectual recall, between discourse and matter.[39]

In its dialectical heterogeneity, *Life? or Theatre?* is consistent with an avant-garde effort toward the sublation of art and life (as described by Bürger), art as an instrument for living life (like Surrealist automatic writing); it illustrates that art is not only dialectical but self-consciously so because it searches for its own overcoming. This can be seen as an effect, or perhaps even as a motive, for Salomon's employment of the *Singspiel* genre. And of course, in the very title of the work, Salomon points us

[39] Exhibition of the work is likewise a reflection of what is remembered and forgotten, which elements are affirmed and which are negated. It too is a memory project, somewhat distinct from the work itself.

toward the dialectical interplay between life and art, evoking the idea that through the interplay of these two forces memory can be made and remade.

She affirms this position by relaying at the heart of her narrative, and in extensive detail, her lover's aesthetic theories, which are devoted to this very notion and are derived from his experience of post-traumatic memory as a veteran of World War I. Through his process of recovery he has discovered that art is a means of regenerating life by reconstructing memory; he concludes that, "art cannot exist for itself but must flow from life" (Salomon 293), by which he means from a confrontation between Eros and Thanatos. This through line in the work reflects my second definition of cultural memory as *recollection of what lay beyond the reality principle, beyond the limitations of a present state of material existence. Life? or Theatre?*'s life affirming dimension enacts and mobilizes this kind of memory.

Life? or Theatre?'s cultural memory work has a particularly feminist character since it centrally addresses the gendered nature of social life and the intersectional nature of the artist's identity. Consequently, the work speaks to my third definition[40] of cultural memory because it stimulates empathy in the service of political will. In the following pages I will consider the feminist dimensions of this work in detail by surveying critics' analyses of *Life? or Theatre?*'s feminist content and aesthetic strategies. I will then provide additional perspective on the work's feminist dimension, by drawing from feminist art theory. The feminist aspect of *Life? or Theatre?* deserves

[40] Third definition: *constructed knowledge in the service of political will and material advancement based on empathy, which is stimulated through a synthesis of the embodied and intellectual modes of perception*

this sustained attention because, as I will later show, that aspect has been undervalued by critics, by curators, and by public discourse surrounding its exhibition. Also, its feminist character opens up the possibility of social intervention by feminist cultural memory, which I have envisioned in earlier chapters. In other words, I hope to elucidate some of the work's innovative features and, in turn, the means and manifestations of feminist intervention in social and cultural life, thereby demonstrating the value of understanding art as cultural memory. I will then proceed to argue that a recent exhibition of the work constrained its feminist dimension and thereby conditioned (in a sense, depoliticized or politically reoriented) the kind of cultural memory it generated. Having established in this chapter the work's contribution to feminist cultural memory, and how the exhibition contained or prohibited this reading, I will undertake in chapter 5 to analyze the socioeconomic system of patriarchal capitalism that contextualizes the exhibition, and I will suggest its impact on shaping the representation of *Life? or Theatre?* [41] Consequently, these final chapters provide a case study in understanding art as cultural memory and in analyzing the political economy of the arts from a socialist feminist, cultural memory perspective.

[41] My approach here is comparable to Douglas Kellner's multiperspectival critical cultural studies frame and his three-pronged methodology, which I trace back to the methodology of the Frankfurt School. Those theorists developed the method of investigating cultural production through textual analysis, reception studies, and political economy critique.

The Feminist Dimension

The first and most obvious element of Salomon's work that serves a feminist agenda is its heterogeneous form, which draws attention to the work's formal construction and thereby highlights the construction of meaning by semiotic discourse. Given the arbitrary relationship between sign and signified, we can understand that meaning is socially produced through linguistic structures. For instance, the meaning we associate with gender categories such as "feminine" significantly depends on symbolic practices that associate signs with one another, so that feminine comes to mean "beauty", "frailty", "maternity", etc. Feminist art has often confronted and deconstructed the structures of meaning that significantly determine our ideas, experiences, and interpretations. Likewise, by hybridizing art forms Salomon forces us to be aware of the aesthetic devices and social constructions impacting our reading of her work and our interpretations of the world. This formal characteristic lends a transformative potential to the work by opening up a space for revision and for psychological and somatic development by discursively deconstructing subjectivity and the social world. In this way the work reflects my *fifth definition of cultural memory as a collective understanding of private lives, embedded in cultural life, or the meeting of personal and collective identifications that is articulated by cultural media.* The work lends itself to this kind of memory construction because its feminist deconstruction of aesthetics foregrounds the ways in which individuals are culturally interpolated.

While this aesthetic strategy is not unique to feminist art, it is frequently

employed within the avant-garde toward non-essentializing, feminist goals (Barry and Flitterman-Lewis 58). Nochlin's study of feminist art allows us to align Salomon's formal interventions with those of other feminist artists who experiment with hybrid and interdisciplinary art forms to highlight and subvert the sometimes oppressive means of the production of meaning:

> Barbara Kruger, Cindy Sherman, Mary Kelly, and many others are again cutting into the fabric of representation by refusing any kind of simple 'mirroring' of female subjects; they turn to collage, photomontage, self-indexical photography, combinations of texts, images, and objects as ways of calling attention to the production of gender itself—its inscription in the unconscious—as a social construction rather than a natural phenomenon. (Nochlin 29)

While Nochlin does not write about Salomon directly, her review of feminist art history suggests to me that Salomon's work could be considered a historical precedent in this vein since it too critiques the production of gendered subjectivity and objectification. Indeed, this is a central concern within *Life? or Theatre?* addressed by the work's visual perspective and intertextuality as much as by its narrative content. (Many examples will be explored below). Nochlin also draws our attention to similar techniques in the work of Salomon's contemporary, Hannah Hoch, whose photocollage practice "denies the beauty of the beautiful woman as object of the gaze" (Nochlin 29), demonstrating that such concerns were not absent from early 20th century, German art.

Such a deconstruction of gendered, aesthetic discourse has been illuminated by

feminist filmmaking in particular. As de Lauretis explains,

> in order to counter the aesthetic of realism, which was hopelessly compromised with bourgeois ideology, as well as Hollywood cinema, avant-garde and feminist filmmakers must take an oppositional stance against narrative "illusionism" and in favor of formalism. The assumption was that "foregrounding the process itself, privileging the signifier, necessarily disrupts aesthetic unity and forces the spectator's attention on the means of production of meaning." (de Lauretis 128 quoting Silvia Bovenschen)

Salomon achieves such oppositional transparency by explicitly referencing a multiplicity of semiotic systems (e.g. newspapers, fairytales, myth, art history, poetry, music, philosophy, film) within her work, which highlight the media of meaning.[42] She also reveals the construction of her "theatre" and the "work" of its production through the repetition of images and the layering of seemingly incomplete or primitive sketches. The layering of text within many paintings and in transparent overlays further draws attention to the work as a discursive construction, as does the extent to which her images mimic frames of film and pre-production storyboards in the era of cinema's

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[42] To some extent the work is consonant with cubist collage; both employ everyday objects, which facilitates the intrusion of the real. For this reason, both are provocative and multiperspectival without being anti-representational. But in Salomon the collage effect exceeds formalist innovation to perform social commentary, whereas cubists were interested primarily in the pictorial surface. As Guillaume Apollinaire explains, with cubism "versimilitude no longer has any importance, for the artist sacrifices everything to the composition of his picture. The subject no longer counts, or if it counts, it counts for very little....the new painters provide their admirers with artistic sensations due exclusively to the harmony of lights and shades and independent of the subject depicted in the picture." (Apollinaire 180)

emergence. Furthermore, by fictionalizing her autobiography, translating key people from her life into characters, Salomon draws attention to the constructed nature of the theatre she has created while communicating the malleable character of reality. She thereby promotes a critical analysis in her audience concerning that reality.

These avant-garde techniques lend the work a Brechtian ambition toward social change.[43] Bertolt Brecht pioneered a theatrical mode that draws attention to itself as a construction of reality, and forces critical, audience engagement by reminding the audience of the constructed nature of reality (Brecht). Brechtian theatre pursues estrangement effects (via e.g. songs that interrupt the action, explanatory placards) to shock the audience into an awareness and examination of the familiar conventions of art and the naturalized conditions of everyday life. Likewise, Salomon uses many of the same interventions to produce a theatrical performance that challenges aesthetic precepts and critically confronts her own biography. By employing such heterogeneous and deconstructive forms of expression, Salomon draws attention to the illusions created by art and media, which are always instrumental to the reification of identities in their representation of ethnicity, class and gender.[44]

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[43] It is worth noting that Brecht wrote "Salomon Song" for his *Threepenny Opera*, an opera that centrally addresses sexual oppression, and a song that speaks to moral crisis, themes that are central to Salomon's work. Salomon would undoubtedly have been familiar with this production, which achieved wide recognition after its opening in Berlin in 1928. This suggests that her employment of Brechtian techniques in her *Singspiel* was neither accidental nor incidental. A detailed comparison of the two works might also be revealing.

[44] I will demonstrate a particularly good example of this dynamic in my discussion of the work's Sleeping Beauty motif, below.

Physical perspective within the images also communicates and thereby confronts the place of women in discourse (since the work itself is discursive), and in extra-discursive social relations. As Astrid Schmetterling explains, "most of the later scenes take place in interiors, presented at close range. Pictorial spaces that convey a sense of intimacy but also that of confinement. [sic] These are the spaces of those who are increasingly isolated and excluded from the public sphere..." (Schmetterling 126). Here, the social and cultural dynamics of power coincide within gendered and multi-generational relationships, bringing the material reality of patriarchy into conceptual view. In the spatial arrangement within the gouaches, "men break into women's domains, but women are not permitted to break into men's" (Lowenthal Felstiner "Taking" 326). For example, witness the images that emerge from Salomon's period of temporary internment with her grandfather and convey her attitude toward the power dynamics of space and gender (Salomon 803-811). As Lowenthal Felstiner has observed,

> What she preserved [of her summer 1940 internment at Gurs] was disgust with her grandfather—as if the rats, the sweat, the noise, the violations of a very solitary person all embodied themselves in him. Three weeks in the ratty barracks of Gurs, and not a single commemorative sketch. Eight full paintings [only two of which are included in the exhibition discussed below] devoted to where Grosspapa and Charlotte would sleep a few nights after they got out. Maybe those nights, recalled two years later, trespassed the deepest part of

> herself, where she had to fend off even her fellow exiles. In scenes on the way back to Nice, Grosspapa crowds Charlotte's spirit and body, saying, "What's wrong with sharing a bed with me if there's nothing else around?" [Salomon 804] Charlotte, a mere refugee on the road, has to ask an innkeeper: "Would it be possible—I can't sleep beside by grandfather—for me to sleep somewhere else?" [Salomon 806] Then she meets a stranger looking for his family and tilts back in empathy...but he responds by putting an arm around her. She pulls away, he carps, she barricades her door...he forces his way in the window, she screams... [Salomon 808-811] (Lowenthal Felstiner, "Taking" 125)

The subject seemingly contends with sexual violence both internal and external to the family. The artist manipulates the question of space—as privacy or isolation, security or danger—by representing where segregation meets invasion, from a distinctively gendered vantage point, one that intersects with her generational and ethnic subjectivity as a young, Jewish migrant. Consequently, Salomon is relating/creating a memory of migration and of gendered relationships as they challenge and engage each other to reveal the intersectional power dynamics therein. She further compels critical reflection on the matter within the next image as she desperately claims responsibility for the rapist's actions and attempts to shield him from public shame (Salomon 811). She depicts both the attack and her denial of it. She thereby generates a memory of the event and of her submission to subordination. It is a memory of interpellation that undoes the interpellation.

Salomon's engagement with patriarchy develops further through the figure of Grosspapa; he comes to represent the link between patriarchy and creative annihilation. As Van Alphen has observed, Grosspapa "stands for the tradition in family life that subjects female children to the power of the father, and for the tradition in creative life that excludes women from artistic subjecthood". The artist "resists him by [visually] covering him with words" (Van Alphen, Caught 87) in aesthetic retaliation. But within the narrative, her removal from his "protection" leads her into the path of a potential, stranger rapist. He thereby comes to represent an internal threat that is seemingly the only alternative to external danger. Indeed, this is the bind of the patriarchal contract. Salomon's power to overcome this dynamic is limited in the extra-discursive realm, but her discursive resistance provides a basis for her enfranchisement as a subject through the medium of cultural memory.

The subject of gender politics is not simply episodic. It is woven throughout the text as a dominant theme. Within the dramatic narrative, the work habitually conveys pivotal feminist concepts such as gendered violence, the patriarchal contract, male privilege, domestic isolation, objectification, and compulsory heterosexuality. It is evident within this story that "men are entitled to avoid the painful issues: Charlotte's father covers his ears against his wife's recitals of melancholy. But the women keep asking themselves terrifying questions: 'Am I to blame for her death?' and 'For what am I staying alive?' " (Lowenthal Felstiner, "Taking" 326). Salomon intimately details

her mother's submission to the conscription of being daughter, wife and mother[45] and her grandmother's descent into self-loathing and immolation[46], judging herself a failure in these roles. Moreover, the artist continuously emphasizes the narcissism and cruelty she perceives in the men around her and their mistreatment of her.[47] Yet relatively little critical attention has been paid to the consistent and pervasive quality of these themes. Most critics are interested in the work's status as Jewish history or as the representation of trauma with little direct reference to gender.

However, the dialectical potential of feminist art reveals here that gender is not just a singular experience of patriarchy; Salomon also highlights female power with effervescent ingenuity, especially through her depiction of Paulinka, the adored stepmother. Here, Salomon challenges the archetype of jealous, female competition and mutual destruction, embedded in German fairytales, with a representation of female solidarity. This leads Lowenthal Felstiner to conclude that *Life? or Theatre?* is "testimony at last against those myths of female spite... This fairy tale has a girl rushing 'to be tenderly hugged by the much-loved figure' of her second mother....The artist knew she'd upended a myth" (Lowenthal Felstiner, *To Paint* 23). In place of the evil and vain stepmother, Salmon depicts a stepmother's careful negotiation of her career, her balancing of social and domestic duty with the self-realization of her

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[45] Salomon 54, 58-9, 66-72, 166-81
[46] Salomon 143-191, 677-683, 732-790
[47] Salomon 185, 236-7, 265-8, 297, 300, 313-18, 339-61, 372-3, 383, 413, 428-42, 460-6, 473, 506-7, 529, 535-7, 539, 541, 543-6, 561, 570, 573, 578, 591-3, 598-605, 618, 631-2, 682-3, 723, 745-52, 766-9, 779, 790-3, 804-11, 814

creative work.[48] Her selection of a musical genre pays tribute to her stepmother's profession. Salomon also dedicates the work to a female friend and art collector of independent economic means, thereby again acknowledging women's potential self-sufficiency, as well as their interdependence. Essentially, she objectifies the suffering of women to which she has borne witness and of which she has been a victim, as well as the creative and economic potential for their deliverance; she writes her work into the history of feminist struggle while writing the achievements of other women, as well as their despair. She is creating and recreating the memory of her own femininity through this interplay of the polarities of a feminine experience—asserting her own memories against each other in search of something else. By so doing, Salomon creates a heuristic piece for others to understand their own experiences and memories.

Even in her attention to women's suicide she illustrates an emancipatory concept, not (as some have claimed) that suicide is an essentially creative act or affirmative choice (e.g. Van Alphen, "Giving" 125), but simply and more powerfully that the personal is political. The artist's mother committed suicide "in a nation with one of the highest suicide rates in the world, in a province and capital with the highest rate in the nation, in a city with the highest ratio of female suicides, in a class with the highest rate among classes, in a faith with the highest proportion among faiths. Her suicide was not anomalous [or private], it was *exemplary*" (Lowenthal Felstiner, *To Paint* 14, italics original). By investigating the source of the suicidal imperative for

[48] Salomon 93-141, 249-51, 260-2, 273-7, 326-37, 417-423, 454-458

these many women, of which her mother was an exemplar, the artist suggests the common and socialized nature of mental illness and embeds it in the category of gender. In this way, Salomon articulates Durkheim's famous argument concerning the social nature of suicide, against the understanding of it as merely an individuated act, but she surpasses him by examining the gendered nature of this phenomenon. The work expresses that to be a woman is "to be occupied and vacated at the same time, to be separate from others and undifferentiated at the same time: this, as Charlotte imagined it, is suicidal sentience" (Lowenthal Felstiner, "Taking" 326).

The very fact that *Life? or Theatre?* is a study in women's mental health translates into feminist critique. As Wark explains, "one way that feminist artists formulated their resistance to how female bodies and sexualities had been determined and disciplined within patriarchal culture was to transgress taboos and defiantly flaunt the connotations of the corporeal body as 'abject' " (Wark 170). This practice can be used to reread Salomon's representation of the taboo "madness" afflicting the female members of her family, utilizing and usurping the historical representation or memory of the "madwoman". By publicizing her intimate family history, Salomon "reveal[s] and resist[s] the operations of cultural repression by which the female body and the feminine had been aligned with the abject" (Wark 170, writing of feminist performance art). Simultaneously, she amplifies the mechanism of this repression, by forcing confrontation with family secrets: "Her family literally faces her in these painting in a way that they did not and could not during her childhood and young adulthood"

(Buerkle 86). And it is in this paradigm of the domestic sphere that she reveals the underlying, common causes of female degradation. Put differently, "in maternal madness she found reason: the loneliness of women's lives, the misuse of their minds, the disregard by relatives they were meant to love" (Lowenthal Felstiner, *To Paint* 12). Thus we find a densely woven pattern of feminist thought in the work's management of the subject of suicide.

It is also worth considering the feminist dimension of this work as a form of autobiography. Despite the fictionalized appearance of the work as a whole, all of the characters within it are drawn from the artist's own life and she appears as "Charlotte Kann". These factors render the work autobiographical, though her narrative perspective shifts to various women and one man. *Women*'s autobiographical writings generally lack the male-traditional focus on the individual. Mason claims that "an unfolding self-discovery where characters and events are little more than aspects of the author's evolving consciousness, finds no echo in women's writing about their lives" (Mason 22). Instead, a woman's autobiographical writing tends to ground her sense of self in her relationships to others. This has led Doris Sommer to claim that the "most salient feature of women's autobiographical writings is an implied and often explicit 'plural subject', rather than the singular subject we associate with traditional autobiography" (Sommer 107). In the case of *Life? or Theatre?*, Salomon's identification with a plurality of subjects through her characters is explicitly evident in her visual rendering of the protagonist Charlotte Kann, whose face occasionally alters

such that she resembles other characters in the play. The plurality of the narrator's perspective leads Salomon's biographer Lowenthal Felstiner to claim that "the unique form of *Life? or Theatre?* models itself on women—as emblems of empathy" (Lowenthal Felstiner, "Taking" 335). Salomon projects herself into the minds of several women in her play by relating their moments of private anguish in depth. This enables her to tell her own story and theirs through their intersections, without the egoism of male privilege.

Her projection into the mind of her mother, who committed suicide when Salomon was eight years old, particularly conveys an empathy toward women's experience that spans and transcends specific historic contexts as she transports herself into a predecessor's existence. She performs this empathic representation to concoct a symbolic solidarity that helps Salomon to cope with her own despair. Celeste Schenck explains the significance in women's writing of identification with the mother in particular, as a mode of self-reclamation:

> ... the mother's 'secret poetry' is the intertext, manifesting itself at the level of linguistic signs as well as actual words, typographical interruption of the page, visual as well as auditory rhythms. The effect of its dialogical presence in the daughter's autobiography is the diminishment of exile, ultimately of both textual and psychological consequence for the female subject... it is continuity with the present of the re-created maternal voice that makes writing at all possible for these daughters who would write. (Schenck 297, 300)

In *Life? or Theatre?*, Salomon consistently relates her mother's personal tragedy to her own disenfranchisement, giving the artist voice to express her own frustrations with womanhood through reunion with the lost mother, while she herself was having to withstand multiple forms of exile: alienation from her father and stepmother, from her lover, from her grandfather, from her school, city and homeland, and from a faith in her own mental stability as she felt herself being tempted by suicidal impulses. This strategy re-establishes relationality to socially and psychologically sustain the subject.

Autobiography has long been a storytelling tool of feminist movements, employed to articulate the political dimension of personal experience and to participate in movement memory making (Wark 7). As a consequence, feminist art has engaged politics by demonstrating that phylogeny recapitulates ontogeny. This *artistic* intervention has been necessary to legitimize the feminist movement since "the use of autobiographical and narrative practices enabled feminist artists to organize this new life praxis by asserting themselves as active and self-determined agents and by challenging dismissive assumptions that any reference to the experience of women as women was self-indulgent and irrelevant to art making" (Wark 88). Autobiographical narratives have drawn the link between the personal and political here, just as slave narratives have served emancipation. Such narratives work in a dialectical fashion "both to explore their [author's] placement within the social structure and to foster an identification with the audience" (Wark 100). While the artist created *Life? or Theatre?* to reflect, confront and transcend both the destruction of women she

witnessed within her own family, and the exploitation she personally experienced, by fostering a relational identification with an audience her work also has the capacity to generate cultural memory around the social position of women. This is what a socialist feminist theory of art as cultural memory lends to our analysis of *Life? or Theatre?*

Another way of understanding Salomon's work as cultural memory is by revisiting Bennett's analysis, which mirrors Brecht and Burke in its consideration of shock and empathy. *Life? or Theatre?* shocks the viewer into adopting a relational, empathetic memory through estrangement effects. The work engrosses us in her psychoanalysis but by fictionalizing the artist's experience and by highlighting the theatrical construction of *Life? or Theatre?* we are prevented from simply appropriating Salomon's memory. We are not lulled into the illusion of this theatre, yet its multisensory intimacy and its extreme self-consciousness convey the sensation of trauma's after effects. Its sheer scale impresses upon us the weight of the matter. Consequently, through its reception, *Life? or Theatre?* translates Salomon's experience of gender into empathic memory with the potential to manifest into discourse and activism. I now turn to examine how this capacity is enabled or constrained by the parameters of its exhibition and critical reception.

Critical Framing of *Life? or Theatre?*

I have provided extensive evidence of *Life? or Theatre?*'s feminist cultural memory work, and I have argued that its feminist dimension reveals the intersectional

nature of oppression and a dialectical approach to cultural memory. I am now interested in considering how these aspects of it have been overshadowed by the nearly exclusive attention paid to Salomon's Jewish identity and situation within the Holocaust. While a few critics have noted the work's feminist dimension, and some have questioned its association with Holocaust art, I have not found an adequately sustained analysis of either concern or anyone willing to assert that these two matters are related. I intend to relate the two here. The discursive emphasis on Salomon's ethnicity has the effect of generating a particular cultural memory from and around the work. As a young, cultivated woman, Salomon has become a symbol, both sympathetic and ideal, of the humanity jeopardized by anti-Semitism. But emphasis on her ethnicity alone is somewhat misleading given the content of the actual work, and it effaces a feminist politics that would better acknowledge the intersections of class, gender, *and* ethnicity to attain a more broadly informed and informative reading of the work and perspective on the artist, which would also enable the more comprehensive cultural memory offered by the work and further analysis of its aesthetic dimensions. In the remainder of this chapter I will examine how a more singular focus was established by a particular exhibition of *Life? or Theatre?* In the next chapter, I will attempt to explain this manifestation by drawing on museum and policy studies to identify the economic context (both discursive and material) of the work's exhibition. As a consequence, I hope to demonstrate the value that a socialist feminist purview has on an analysis of the work as an instrument of cultural memory.

The exhibition I am considering here was organized by the Royal Academy of Arts, London, and toured Toronto, Boston, and New York between 1998 and 2001. I experienced the exhibition during its residence in Toronto at the Art Gallery of Ontario. Outside of this exhibition, the work has been widely associated with Holocaust art not only because the artist was killed at Auschwitz; scenes of anti-Semitism, including her parents' forced resignations, her father's temporary internment, Kristallnacht, hate propaganda and Jewish exodus from Germany, appear within *Life? or Theatre?* and are valuable documents in and of themselves. But these scenes play a relatively minor role in the whole body of work. Critic David MacIagen concurs that, "the rise of Nazism, and its effects on the Salomon family and their friends, occupies a relatively small place, and is in no sense a central theme of the work" (MacIagen 77). Van Alphen adds that while Jewish history is a "reference", this "historical/documentary value seems to preclude awareness of its significance as a work of art; its autonomy is under pressure" (Van Alphen, *Caught* 66-67). Similarly, Norman Rosenthal, Secretary of the Royal Academy in London and originating exhibition curator, claims that he sees the value of the work in its artistic excellence: "I see it as part of the story of art, rather than outsider art. I see it as a work of high art, of great culture and great sophistication and complexity and skill. It's an act of great artistic will of the highest level" (AGO *Member's Journal* 4).

Yet, the exhibition established an audience expectation that the value of the work is intimately tied to the Holocaust. Globe and Mail reviewer Blake Gopnik

admits his reluctance to visit the exhibition because of *Life? or Theatre?*'s World War II associations. After visiting it, he relays that the Nazi element of the work's historical context is actually less present in the work itself than he had been led to believe. He warns "suicides, seduction, murder by Nazis—the drama of Charlotte Salomon's life risks drowning out the impressive talent of her art" (Gopnik 10). If the audience's understanding of the Nazi context in which the work was created actually impinges so little on its appreciation, and indeed threatens to obscure its value, then how has the work come to bear these associations?

The answer to this question lies in the language of the exhibition's marketing and tour guide material, and in its physical layout, rather than in *Life? or Theatre?* itself. The work's touring presentation layered it with Holocaust significance, fixing it in the context of a political, European past. Always in massive print, the refrain "take good care of it, it's my whole life", allegedly uttered by Salomon as she passed her artwork onto friends in France for safe keeping, confronted potential exhibition patrons in the newspaper, on the AGO website, in the gallery's members' journal, in on-site pamphlets, and scrawled across the exhibition's entrance. Buerkle observes that repeated employment of this phrase contradicted the exhibition's otherwise narrow focus on Salomon's death (Buerkle 75). This refrain was usually followed by "As Nazi aggression escalated, the Berlin-born Jewish artist Charlotte Salomon sensed the end was near... Charlotte died in Auschwitz at 26." This detail of the artist's life served to enhance the value and attraction of the work on the grounds that the artist was

persecuted and killed within the most widely acknowledged and abhorred genocide of the last century. While this advertising communicated the certain tragedy of the lost artist, it failed to communicate anything about the form or content of *Life? or Theatre?* and thereby risked undermining the work's art historical value. Granted, the small print quotations from newspaper reviewers that often flanked the advertising somewhat compensated for the marketing rhetoric's focus by reflecting on the artist's technique. Nonetheless, given the overriding impression that this work is deeply concerned with the horrors of Nazism, the audience was encouraged to absorb the exhibition's sentiment of regret more than a nuanced attentiveness to other important elements of the work.

The AGO website's educational content furthered the marketing emphasis on Salomon's Jewish identity by outlining basic details in her biography alongside episodes in the rise of the Third Reich, and not in tandem with any conceptualization of other cultural or historical developments. The Holocaust association was also enhanced by the fact that the educational information offered in community lectures hosted by the AGO contained a consideration of *Life? or Theatre?* in relation to other Holocaust art and situated the work in the context of Nazi censorship.

Additional framing occurs in the exhibition catalogue, where Rosenthal contradicts his impulse, as expressed in the *Member's Journal*, not to promote *Life? or Theatre?* as Holocaust art. Here he claims that the work "stands as one of the few adequate memorials to the tragedy that culminated in the European, and particularly the

Jewish, Holocaust... [and] it anticipates the artist's terrible end" (Rosenthal 9). How, one might ask, does the work "anticipate" this end? According to Rosenthal, there is a "premonition" of some kind in *Life? or Theatre?* He writes, "without knowing the precise nature of the fate that was to befall her, but of which she clearly had premonitions, Salomon narrates events and produces veritable psychoanalyses of the persons who surround her as she heads toward her destiny. She, and those around her, become symbolic of so many nameless others" (Rosenthal 9). Unfortunately, Rosenthal does not indicate where he sees this premonition arising in the work. Indeed, Raphael Rubenstein proposes that Salomon was likely unaware of the danger before her when she presented herself to authorities in Nice; she was turned away because she looked too French to be imprisoned with foreign Jews (Rubenstein 114). Moreover, an acquaintance of Salomon's reported to the artist's biographer that Salomon definitely did not understand the eminent danger. In fact, Lowenthal Felstiner's research led her to conclude that "None of the refugees on the Cote d'Azur understood the roundups... taking Jews from France to Poland to death" (Lowenthal Felstiner, *To Paint* 156). While Salomon's artwork shows that she suffered from the restrictions and hatred imposed by anti-Semitism in Berlin, there is nothing in the work to suggest that she was at all aware of her fate, nor that she particularly exemplified the suffering of six million Jews, especially since she was able to leave Berlin and live comfortably for four years in the South of France. The closing scene of *Life? or Theatre?* depicts the artist seated by the seashore, soul-searching, hopeful and inspired—hardly an indication that she

was conscious of coming tragedy. Furthermore, the occasion mentioned above, in which she turned herself in for deportation, signals her relative lack of awareness of the gravity of her circumstances, as does the fact that she and her husband returned to their address in France in 1943 (from which they were later deported) despite having other options and despite having been warned that such action would likely lead to their arrest (Salomon 25). These historical details appear within the same volume as Rosenthal's comments, and render his reading questionable. It seems to be a construction, to lend Salmon's work value as a document of clairvoyance.

The exhibition's format reinforced Rosenthal's reading and directed the gallery audience to contextualize the work exclusively within the Holocaust. Upon entering the exhibition at the AGO, the viewer was presented with numerous photographs of Salomon as a young child, something you were not likely to see at any of the other exhibitions occurring simultaneously. Granted, her work is autobiographical, but the childhood pictures were superfluous and merely generated sympathy on the part of the spectator, drawing inappropriate associations between Salomon and Anne Frank, who wrote her diary as an adolescent, and was murdered at age 15, more than a decade younger than Salomon.

There is also the fact that Salomon's first depiction of anti-Semitism is given its own wall and frame, marking the entrance to the second room, whereas all of the preceding gouaches were framed in groups. This image depicts a Nazi rally on January 30, 1933, when Hitler was sworn in as chancellor (Salomon 192). Several following

images represent Nazi propaganda, the professional persecution of Salomon's parents and Kurt Singer's establishment of the Jewish Culture League in 1933 (Salomon 193-205). A later image represents the anti-Semitism of Pope Puis XI (Salomon 216), and two more signal some degree of party influence on the fine arts academy to which Salomon gains admission (Salomon 224 &240). Kristallnacht is represented by two images that depict propaganda and looting (Salomon 647-648). These are followed by images that relate to the arrest of Salomon's father (Salmon 649-655). Several images later, Salomon notes that Jews are barred from public establishments (Salomon 672), and then she conveys that there are reports of German Jews being mistreated in the camps (Salomon 683). Five following images document her father's internment, release, and recovery at home (Salomon 684-689). The main section's final chapter depicts a dinner party at which the primary topic is Jewish emigration (Salomon 690-693). It concludes with images of Salomon leaving Berlin. The subject of the war in general occasionally re-emerges in the epilogue as a backdrop to the action, and a few images in the main section include the swastika, but it is primarily these images noted above that pertain directly to Jewish persecution.[49] Most of these images appeared in the exhibition, which comprised a total of 405 images from *Life? or Theatre?*

In the midst of exploring these and other images, the spectator is led through a screening room in which film from the Third Reich—Nazi soldiers marching, saluting,

[49] According to the Jewish Historical Museum, the "complete collection" appears on their website, where they have categorized 47 images under the themes "antisemitism" and "national socialism", including 10 "disapproved" verso images, which the archive regards as drafts of other images. (December 13, 2011 http://www.jhm.nl/collection/themes/charlotte-salomon/leben-oder-theater)

and burning books—is continuously reeled. While this film diverges from the artist's instructions regarding her work's presentation (implicit in the fact that Salomon did not script the intrusion of Third Reich film into *Life? or Theatre?*), it restates the significance of the work in terms of the racial and political nightmare surrounding the Holocaust.[50]

Now consider the audio guide, which is included in the ticket price of the exhibition, encouraging the spectator's reliance on it as a means of interpreting *Life? or Theatre?* It opens with Matthew Teitelbaum (Director of the Art Gallery of Ontario) informing the patron's appreciation of the work. He tells us that the work was "made in exile, hidden from public view for decades" (AGO *Press Script* 2), thereby emphasizing its history as a matter of Jewish persecution and subversion. The guide also concludes with Teitelbaum's voice telling the listener that "the work of Charlotte Salomon must stand as a very special monument to Jewish suffering during one of the most horrific and bestial periods of recent European history----and furthermore stands as a wondrously heroic exploration of some of the most fundamental questions of human existence----which touches us all" (AGO *Press Script* 20). The language in this statement not only contends that the work primarily represents the persecution of the Jews; it also arbitrarily bridges "Jewish suffering" and a vague, universal suffering "which touches us all", thereby both asserting that the work is a monument primarily to anti-Semitism, deeply entwined with the persecution of the Jews in World War II, and

[50] While the exhibition was curated by Rosenthal at the Royal Academy and toured many locations, it seems that the AGO alone decided to add this screening room. (Greenburg 162)

then negating even that claim—diluting the acuity of Jewish persecution—by blending it into a common and diffuse emotion devoid of subjectivity.

I concur with the many critics cited above that the nearly singular emphasis on Salomon's experience of the Third Reich, considering its relatively minor appearance in her narrative, risks obscuring the artistic merits of the work. I want to add that the AGO exhibition influenced aesthetic reception by writing the work into a specific historical context that typified the exhibition itself as a protagonist in a struggle against fascism—a survivor and a reminder—shaping the history of the exhibition as well as the history of its artist into the story of Nazi aggression. By narrating the artwork as testimonial to this tragedy primarily, (even though it was completed two years before Salomon was deported), the exhibition obscured many other aspects of the work.

I am not claiming that Salomon's Jewish identity is irrelevant, but rather that ongoing attention to this subject almost singularly is problematic. Specifically, while this exhibition's focus left little room in its rhetoric or presentation to declaim *Life? or Theatre?*'s artistic merits, it also negated the work's intersectional feminist politics. It did this by failing to attend adequately to the artist's skill, by ignoring the political significance of its avant-garde form, and by excluding numerous gouaches that make overt feminist claims in opposition to the insufficiencies characterizing the lives of the women dramatized. Since much of Salomon's representation of and comment on women's experience—a major thematic concern of *Life? or Theatre?*—was erased from the exhibition, its concentration on the Holocaust seems like an attempt to fill the

lacuna of artistic motive, content, and value left by the absented feminist discourse, just as its characterization of the work as "universal" seeks to elide difference and evade marginalization.

Of course, these two exhibition strategies contradicted each other, and the exhibition would have benefitted from an intersectional analysis of subjectivity. This problem crystallizes when we consider Lowenthal Felstiner's comment on the gendered dimension of the Holocaust:

> In that crucial moment on the ramp, one sex was chosen disproportionately for death. What helped make the Final Solution...a 'new thing'...[was] the stealthy intentional murder of a Jewish female sex.... *Women* were the ones more often left behind during emigrations from the Reich....they were the ones left out of leadership in Jewish groups that stayed; they were the ones forced to have sex in internment camps like Gurs...harassed on the road...in want of contraception through the war...deported for their pregnancies...not part of any Jewish Order Service exempted from the trains. (Lowenthal Felstiner, *To Paint* 205)

These discrepancies cannot be accounted for in terms of labour, because jobs at the camps "took no special skill, and none were thought too hard for female hands" (Lowenthal Felstiner, *To Paint* 207). The primary explanation for this disproportionate persecution was to "'obliterate the biological basis of Jewry,' said Himmler to Höss" (Lowenthal Felstiner, *To Paint* 207). It would be especially worth noting this context in the exhibition if the curators are concerned with Salomon's experience of the Holocaust

as a woman, since the artist was pregnant when she was killed. Unfortunately, the crucial intersection of ethnicity and gender was not adequately addressed.

Buerkle argues that the work's critical framing leaves no room for such intersectional analysis. She writes that "the post-Holocaust spectator can, and I argue does, interpolate the Holocaust into Salomon's images even when, in fact, it is not there" because the spectator

> constructs a narrative about Salomon's work that attempts to anchor the spectator herself in a moral order. The persuasiveness of this moral order, in turn, depends on the history of totalitarianism in its totalizing effects. Spectral subjectivity constructed on this basis makes it necessary that what Salomon places at the center of her narrative—namely women's despair and suicide, apart from the specific Nazi brutality—not be true. (Buerkle 74-75, italics original)

Essentially, cultural memory surrounding the Holocaust is so strong that it compels the reading of any work by or about Jews through its lens, even when it blinds us to other readings.

Buerkle does not otherwise criticize the exhibition or extensively consider its feminist dimension, outside of her attention to the problem of suicide. I hope to have revealed here the many ways in which the exhibition attempted to frame the work as Holocaust art and as universal trauma, as well as the feminist dimension thereby excluded. However, I am not the first to consider the exhibition's construction of the work in detail. Greenberg experienced the *Life? or Theatre?* exhibition at the Royal

Academy and considers how vicarious trauma was problematically managed by its physical format, which the AGO maintained. For Greenberg, the exhibition demonstrated

> how an institution can tame work difficult to categorize or display by assimilating it to a very traditional concept of an artwork, one based on easel painting hung on a wall.... Rather than elevating the cycle to wall art, the elaborate installation, I would argue, detrimentally transformed the artist's conception. The pretty or unusual surface patterns of the hang had the effect of aestheticizing Salomon's trauma narrative and its unusual format. Underlying this decorative display was a projection of an institution's reluctance to accommodate or accept traumatic, gendered, or creative difference. Viewers witnessed a curatorial 'acting out' which fundamentally altered the identity of the work on display. (160 Greenberg)

Greenberg's concern is that the work was fragmented by the exclusion of most transparencies and by its hanging in both vertical and horizontal lines. Images became isolated and the work's formal complexity was compromised, making it seem more mainstream (Greenberg 157, 159). Another way of understanding this problem would be to posit that the exhibition disabled the "transaction of sensation" about which Bennett writes. It enabled the comfortable appropriation of the artist's experience as it was framed by the exhibition, and denied the empathic vision potential to the original work.

Greenberg concludes that the exhibition performed its own trauma:

> Re-framing, interrupting the narrative, changing direction or adding a postscript to *Life? or Theatre?* are various ways of constructing a safe public space for viewers to witness the personal and historical tragedies portrayed by the artist. All such interventions, however well-intended, run the risk of distorting the artwork. The exhibition space then becomes one of contending histories and repeated traumas (Greenberg 164).

I would like to consider here one such "trauma" which pertains to Salomon's employment of a Sleeping Beauty motif, a crucial component of the work that was lost in the exhibition. Critics have not considered this aspect of *Life? or Theatre?* so far, and it reveals in detail some of the feminist content of the work while demonstrating its heterogeneous form. The narrative of Sleeping Beauty reverberates on many levels of *Life? or Theatre?* The fairytale itself depicts the collapse and resurrection of a creative female voice. It represents a social silencing of women and a reliance on male regeneration of the female that Salomon's life and work resisted, which is probably why the fairytale dances through her artwork. It also articulates the impact of cultural memory on the artist, as she draws on folk culture.

There are numerous gouaches that allude to the Sleeping Beauty fairytale. The exhibition includes two frames in which Barbara, one of Charlotte's classmates, is admired by the class for her beauty (Salomon 238-9). A few gouaches later, Salomon relates Barbara's thoughts, but these frames have been omitted from the exhibition (the

consequences of which are considered below). She reflects, "I am Barbara, beloved by all, but I can only love the one – my own. The mists do billow and swell, tinged by the sun of morn – and no one can ever tell, why I feel so forlorn. The mists do billow and swell, tinged by the sun of the morn – and there's only one who can tell, why I feel so forlorn" (Salomon 242-243). Barbara's sense of isolation is further expressed in the following gouache: "Out there in the forest there goes – there lives many a prince or princess – in the forest, there let us hearken. Sleep gently, Sleeping Beauty, how sweet you look!" (Salomon 244). In the next frames, Charlotte and Barbara become friends. Charlotte learns of Barbara's experience of sexual confinement and self-emancipation, and the two girls develop a silent solidarity based on their shared experience of womanhood:

> Barbara 'We only kissed once, and they put me in a convent.
>
> Charlotte 'You only kissed once, and they put you in a convent…'
>
> (Salomon 246)
>
> Barbara 'I escaped from there, and now I'm here, and of course we're still seeing each other.'
>
> Charlotte 'And of course you're still seeing each other.'
>
> (Salomon 247)
>
> And they walked home together, absorbed in silent communication.
>
> (Salomon 248)

Although Barbara is the beauty of the art class, by escaping the convent, enrolling in

school, and continuing to pursue her desires, she subverts the imposition of her archetype and achieves autonomy. In these omitted gouaches, the dimensions of the beautiful classmate emerge: She is not merely our beautiful Barbara – nor the sweet looking, comatose exile – but a troubled artist who confronts sexual oppression. She is not another suicidal Juliet. By only including the gouaches in which Barbara's beauty is widely admired, the exhibition actually condoned the idealization of women's aesthetic value that Salomon disparages, thereby canceling Salomon's critique of women's social construction (though it is central to the uncensored work) and shaping the exhibition's contribution to cultural memory.

The Sleeping Beauty allusion reappears when Salomon depicts the character of her lover, resigning his fiancé to the role of Sleeping Beauty. Several gouaches portray his mistreatment of the fiancé. He postpones their wedding for years, he loses her ring, he arrives to see her on her birthday three hours late and then leaves early to meet secretly with another woman. He is unfaithful and he even takes his lover Charlotte on a romantic excursion in a boat that is named after his fiancé—whose name we never learn, just as the fairytale fails to name the princess. He keeps a picture of the fiancé with him, which he is asked about on her birthday. He tells his interlocutor that it was "taken when she'd just turned ten. That's how I still see her … She must be about thirty. She's a little Sleeping Beauty that should not be awakened" (Salomon 340). Then he acknowledges "but the way things are nowadays princes are allowed to starve and Sleeping Beauties have to work as typists" (Salomon 341). The former image was

included in the exhibition, but not the latter. In this commentary, the audience catches a glimpse of the realities of women's lives through the eyes of a man who would like to keep them elevated, but perpetually frozen, petrified in his image of perfection. He calls his fiancé "the very paragon of all women in the flesh" (Salomon 341) and obsesses over her photograph, wherein she stands like a helpless child in the woods; about this he utters, "out there in the forest, where I hear the wind sweep, there lies my princess, fast asleep. Sleeping Beauty, oh Sleeping Beauty!" (Salomon 351, omitted from the exhibition). The object of desire is one that can neither speak nor be named, and her vacancy allows her to stand in for all that is feminine. Though much of this character's mistreatment of his fiancé appears in the exhibition, Salomon's contextualization of her within the Sleeping Beauty motif—referencing a myth of wide social dissemination and consequence—does not. Consequently, Salomon's message about, not only individual incidences of sexism, but systemic, psychosocial inequality is substantially diluted.

The Sleeping Beauty allusions that are left out also make meaningful the gouache in which Charlotte's art professor ruminates, "our German fairy tales are a priceless treasure. Blessed be he who preserves them!" (Salomon 237). This scene indicates that Salomon recognizes the obstacle to emancipation presented by men such as her professor who insist on keeping alive the oppressive construction of gender and social order propagated in fairytales. Salomon's use of the Sleeping Beauty fairytale comments on a problem in her society's perception of gender that is represented by her

professor's insistence on keeping such myths alive. He insists one frame earlier, while looking over a male and female student, "be ever true and constant too, until beneath the sod, and waver not a finger's breadth from ways marked out by God" (Salomon 236, omitted from the exhibition). This scene highlights the professor's means of reinforcing the ideological status quo through the classroom.

Salomon's approach to social criticism through fairytale is telling since "unlike any country in the western world, with the possible exception of Great Britain, Germany has incorporated folk and fairy tales in its literary socialization process so that they play a most formative role in cultivating aesthetic taste and value systems" (Zipes 134). Salomon recognized the impact of myth, poetry, and the written word on social consciousness and in particular on the description of women's lives. This is likely one reason why she painted a narrative accompanied by text and she incorporated newspaper clippings and various literary allusions into her text. She reappropriated this cultural material to highlight its impact on social life and to facilitate her own creative reckoning with life. Likewise, her alter ego in the work encourages her grandmother to live despite the tragedy in her life (mostly caused by the suicides of those related to her) by writing and developing her own artistic voice. To her grandmother she says,

> Some of your most recent poems are positively inspired, and I am convinced that a great literary talent has been lost in you. So I'll make you the following proposition: instead of taking your own life in such a horrible way...why don't you make use of the same powers to describe your life? I am sure there must be

> some interesting material that weighs on you, and by writing it down you will liberate yourself and perhaps perform a service to the world. (Salomon 762-763, omitted from the exhibition)

Here Salomon perceives the sleeping beauty within her grandmother, the repressed or anesthetized creative potential, whose absence feeds the death instinct, and she encourages her artistry as an affirmation of life. Like Salomon, the grandmother is both a figure of art and an artist. In her own artistic production, Salomon employs the Sleeping Beauty motif to nuance her representation of female experience and to perform an awakening critique. Ironically, the exhibition portrays *Life? or Theatre?* itself as a kind of sleeping beauty, once lost but reawakened by curators. Unfortunately, the work's feminist discourse has again been exiled into the forest of obscurity, like the princess.

Universalizing Experience

The work's feminist dimension is obscured not only by the omission of pertinent gouaches, and the exhibition's concentration on anti-Semitism, but by rhetoric that disperses the exhibition's significance into a representation of universal struggle. This rhetoric was present in Teitlbaum's voice over (cited earlier), and also appears in the AGO *Member's Journal*, which states that, "the exhibition is about the universal experiences of life and the coming to terms with love and death" (AGO *Member's*

Journal 4). By denying the representation of a specifically gendered, classed, and ethnic experience, this depiction of *Life? or Theatre?* negates its intersectional critique.

Critics like MacIagan further this broad reading of the work. He asks, "could we see Salomon's work as a kind of memorial, not to herself and her family, but to life, and at the same time to the images generated by life?" (MacIagan 76). In MacIagan's reading, the work is not only a memorial to past, as if no longer present, conditions of "life" (a memorial to life?), but it should also find its significance not in the domestic, private sphere of Salomon and her life but in the potentially, more seemingly significant, non-specific, public sphere of "life". In his statement, MacIagan employs a conventional method of excluding female interests from social/political prominence by drawing a false distinction between the private and the public. The dichotomy is also propagated by the AGO website, which argues that "to imagine *Life? or Theatre?* purely as a work derived from a therapeutic process of reintegration is to seriously undermine its intellectual and historical place in the history of art" (AGO Website: Exhibitions: Art and Trauma: Para 9). Why would the work's confrontation with the psychological effects of social relations, "undermine its intellectual and historical place in the history of art" unless its feminist approach to the subject is presumed irrelevant?

The gendered nature of the work is repeatedly overwritten by male analysts in this fashion. Lowenthal Felstiner documents some of this history. For instance, "theologian Paul Tillich gave readers a reason to value Charlotte Salomon: 'There is something universally human, something that bridges the distance between man and

man...in the almost primitive simplicity of these pictures.' The 'universally human' diary governs views of Life? or Theater? for the next twenty years" (Lowenthal Felstiner, *To Paint* 224). Lowenthal Felstiner rightly notes that the work has here been conceived of as both universal and as merely a personal diary, a reading that fails to recognize the work's political dimension or the political dimension of private life, which is not equivalent to its "universality" since it is characterized by power differentials.

However, Lowenthal Felstiner also attempts to bridge gender difference when she inadvertently credits men with the artist's creation and the work's preservation. In reference to Daberlohn's model, Alfred Wolfsohn, Lowenthal Felstiner writes "her mentor, her double, her lover, her seer, born into loss and dread, knew the need for a journey down to one's unlit core. Without him Lotte Salomon would surely have been a painter, but not of *Life? or Theatre?* " (Lowenthal Felstiner, *To Paint* 61). In this statement, which closes a chapter in Salomon's biography, Lowenthal Felstiner mistakenly undermines Salomon's ownership of her work. It is true that the narrative reflects Salomon's engagement with her lover's theories and evidences their role in her creative development. But she independently resolves to overcome her circumstances by delving into the psyches of her characters and the expanse of her experience. She also draws on many other cultural influences (psychoanalysis, fairytales, opera, etc.) of which she would have had direct experience. All of this cannot so easily be attributed to her lover. But by employing Salomon's childhood nickname in this statement,

Lowenthal Felstiner infantilizes the artist and thereby reinforces her conclusion that Salomon is dependent on him in this way.

Lowenthal Felstiner later gives inappropriate credit to Salomon's husband Alexander Nagler when she closes another chapter and section of the biography with this statement: "On the packages that wrapped up *Life? or Theatre?* there were labels in Alexander's hand reading PROPERTY OF MRS. MOORE—a useful ruse for keeping the artwork safe. The 'not very intelligent, not very apt' 'sorry specimen' [comments about Nagler from his sister-in-law and a neighbour] was the one who saved it for us all" (Lowenthal Felstiner, *To Paint* 174). Despite Lowenthal Felstiner's attempt to romanticize our heroine's prince, I believe it was primarily Salomon's decision to surrender *Life? or Theatre?* into the safekeeping of friends that preserved the work throughout the war. The artist was thus responsible for the work's creation and its preservation. Here, Lowenthal Felstiner's gestures to the contrary pulls back from the explicit and controversial feminist critique that appears elsewhere in her book.

Van Alphen performs a similar misreading of the work when he writes that "male creativity and female suicide become the two principal motifs in Life or Theater?" (Van Alphen, Caught 67). Again, it is true that the artist mediates within the work on her lover's theories concerning the myth of Orpheus—as she depicts his obsessive infatuation with her stepmother, his infidelity, his neglect of his fiancé, and his dismissive manipulation of her alter ego, the protagonist Charlotte Kann. But ultimately it is the pain caused by him, and other difficulties within her life, that she

confronts in her work, and her interest in his theories reside here in their promotion of the possibility of Orphic rebirth, creativity instigated by trauma. He is part of what she must destroy for the sake of creative transcendence. She explicitly plays out this confrontation, destruction, and reintegration through the final scenes of *Life? or Theatre?* (Salomon 815-821). Van Alphen's reductive summary of motifs seems to overlook the work's attention to female creativity and male narcissism.

It is the recreation and self-preservation of the artist as well as her confrontation with the social basis of female despair that predominantly characterizes the content and structure of this massive work and permits Salomon, in generating *Life? or Theatre?*, to overturn the Sleeping Beauty narrative by refusing to "sleep" or rely on the prince's rescue. This is what a socialist feminist reading of the work as cultural memory reveals because it recognizes *Life? or Theatre?*'s grounding in historically specific social relations. Just as the once sexually violent and cannibalistic fairytale of Sleeping Beauty has been filtered through memory and rewritten over time, so has Salomon's presentation of her personal experience. She fictionalized her own biography and then lost it to another level of translation when critics and curators reconstructed it, allowing them to author a historical document that is both process and production, as it both represents and recreates Salomon's history, and writes itself into public memory. This recapturing and reinscription is "the endless effect of loss and debt, but it neither preserves nor restores an initial content, as this is forever lost (forgotten) and represented only by substitutes which are inverted and transformed according to the law

set up by a founding exclusion" (de Certeau 323). Critics and curators have invoked the erasure of one history in exchange for the telling of another, first by characterizing the work primarily as Holocaust art and then, as if in compensation for the shortcomings of this strategy, by laying the unifying metanarrative of universal suffering over Salomon's story. Here arises the danger of eliminating alterity inherent in the writing of history, which is an editorial process that aims at making the fact seem like a transcendental thing, the stuff of "universal experience" and "life".

Chapter 5: Policy as a Cultural Memory Frame

In this chapter I will reflect on the AGO's management of *Life? or Theatre?*'s politics while considering the institution's social influence and its structural constraints. As I have shown in the preceding chapter, the exhibition's normative values seem to privilege the representation of ethnic difference over feminist struggle, and historical conflict over present power imbalances, rather than a more complex engagement with these intersecting issues and despite their prominence in the work. My understanding of this problem is informed by a socialist feminist political economy analysis of Canadian cultural policy, and its consequences for what is seen, how it is shown, and the ideological impacts of cultural production on society at-large. I contend that the policy framework impacts the exhibition practices of cultural institutions and the cultural memory politics they produce.

By considering the economic and ideological environment surrounding the AGO at the time of this exhibition, and analyzing its implications for the presentation of Salomon's work, I will argue that cultural institutions such as the AGO are not immune to the effects of patriarchal capitalism in which they are embedded. This is not to say that they are wholly determined by it, but my case study illustrates the potential for patriarchal capitalism to intersect with nationalist discourse and thereby produce within cultural institutions a complacent politics concerning multiculturalism. While cultural

institutions should be representatives of difference, the inherent risk and compromises of such a politics can be used to prop-up social inequality, lacking due consideration of intersectional power and oppression. Given the degree to which a singular focus on Salomon's ethnicity overrides other aspects of her work, the exhibit reflects this context, as I will demonstrate.

I take this to be the case even though curators at the Royal Academy of London organized the exhibition because the AGO had the freedom to alter its presentation of the work so that it could address a broader array of concerns. It had critical distance from the original curatorial process that determined the selection of gouaches and the exhibition format, yet it chose to emphasize the Holocaust association by adding Third Reich film, and by producing its own supplementary educational programming, marketing and publications in the same vein. An analysis of the AGO's context may shed some light on these decisions. By demonstrating that the exhibition reflects its ideological and material conditions in Toronto, I will illustrate how a socialist feminist theory of cultural memory (as a mode of political economy analysis) informs our understanding of the exhibition by providing us with an analysis of patriarchal capitalisms' impact on the arts.

It is necessary to begin with an understanding of the art institution's role in cultural memory because that speaks to the consequences of its work as well as its origins. The approach that art museums bring to exhibitions is informed by cultural memory; curators carry culturally embedded training in aesthetics, institutional

responsibilities and social expectations. Consequently, exhibitions are not purely the result of rational objectivity but reflect cultural contexts. Art museums can also be understood as cultural memory *producers*, or *lieux des memoires* (Nora) because they generate meaning by creating a juncture for the physical and symbolic, for the material and discursive. The artefacts within them contain and transmit cultural memory, but the institutions themselves create another layer of cultural memory as spaces that frame and showcase the work of others. So it is reasonable to claim that their cultural capital enables them to be memory-making sites because they influence the reception of work en masse.

As cultural memory makers, arts institutions play a determinant role in the formation of identity and group affiliation. As Susan Crane explains, "Memory OF cultures, nature, and nations is set to trigger memory IN and for multiple, diverse collectives. These memories then become components of identities—even for individuals who would in no other way feel connected to [museum] objects" (Crane 3, emphasis original). In other words, the institution is set to play a formative role in establishing people's values by creating meaningful experiences. This does not happen in a simple, linear fashion that leaves individuals isolated. As memory transmitters, museums represent dialectical spaces—"sites of interaction between personal and collective identities, between memory and history, between information and knowledge production" (Crane 12). Consequently, they negotiate the terrain between individual cognition and group solidarity, linking people together into collective consciousness.

This is why cultural institutions have the potential to build empathy between those who would not otherwise relate to each other, but to enable empathy it is imperative that these institutions offer diverse and complex narratives of meaning to avoid propagating reductive metanarratives. As Andreas Huyssen explains, ours is a time "when more people are eager to hear and see other stories, to hear and see the stories of others, when identities are shaped in multiply layered and never-ceasing negotiations between self and other, rather than being fixed and taken for granted in the framework of family and faith, race and nation" (Huyssen 34). In other words, the museum must be able to practice an intersectional politics in its construction of cultural memory to reflect the complex nature of subjectivity, which is the nexus of the social and the individual. In Salomon's case, it must be able to hold in tandem analyses of *Life? or Theatre?* that acknowledge the intersection of categories such as ethnicity, gender, and class. This should be obvious to curatorial practice today given the legacy of critical theory, but my case study suggests that it bears repeating. To privilege any one category of analysis risks appropriating the artist's memory, while disregarding differences between subject positions. This is the power of metanarratives to overwrite and reduce a work of art. As Ann Bradbury reminds us (in the context of HIV testimonial), the listener maintains power over the teller: "It is the listener who has ordered the telling, the listener who is in a position to assess and evaluate the teller's character by and through their cultural memory" (pdf 70). Our reading of *Life? or Theatre?* should also be attentive to this hierarchy. Although a wholly undistorted

reading of a work may not be possible, some distortions are greater than others, and we must be careful not to preclude readings of the work if we wish it to empower difference and build empathy.

A complex representation of difference in *Life? or Theatre?* is compromised by the exhibition's narrow and entrenched focus on Salomon's association with the Holocaust. While the absence of a more layered representation of *Life? or Theatre?* may help to mainstream it, the principle of marginalization is reinforced by the exclusion of alternate readings. By reducing Salomon's work to "Holocaust art", the exhibition contradicts its capacity to provide a forum for the historically persecuted because it subscribes to a correlation between social hierarchy and artistic taxonomy. This problem is in fact the raison d'être of contemporary art, much of which has dedicated itself to undoing such correlations through hybrid, interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary interventions that challenge the institutionalization of difference. As Celeste Schenck explains,

> Beneath the Western will to taxonomize lies not only a defensive history of exclusions that constitute a political ideology but also a fetishizing of aesthetic purity... Pure genres, like biological genders, had best remain discrete and intact. Mixed, unclassifiable, blurred, or hybrid genres, like impure, anomalous, or monstrous genders, have traditionally offered up problems to their diagnosticians. Implicit in these sexual metaphors as thoroughly as in genre theory itself is also a binary opposition between norm and departure, between

> convention and confusion, Platonic idea and deceiving appearance, pure form and polluted copy, which bears a subtext of not only gender but also racial oppression. (Schenck 284)

While the exhibition seemingly celebrated the formal hybridity of Salomon's work, the work as a representation of difference, at another level it has done what Schenck describes. The attempt to ameliorate anti-Semitism facilitated the persistence of institutional sexism because the exhibition under-represented the work's feminist dimension. While the exhibition capitalized on Salomon's class and gender to idealize victims of the Holocaust, it otherwise overlooked how these matters complicated the work; it thereby obscured much of what is interesting about the work, and much of what the work is about. It also oversimplified the work's ethnic dimension and, with its strategic essentialism, the exhibit risked asserting that Salmon's ethnicity was grounds for censoring her art. I use the word "censoring" to indicate the political implications of this move. By largely negating the work's feminist dimension, the exhibition inadvertently reproduced the very thing it contested—a silencing of the subaltern. It thereby demonstrated the intersection of varying forms of oppression.

Again, this political mistake is significant because of the institution's role in writing history and producing cultural memory. The art gallery operates under the assumption that (through this exhibition) it contributes to history by memorializing and making culturally prominent the immorality of the Nazi persecution of the Jews, thereby drawing from and adding to the cultural memory of its own society. By

consecrating a set of concerns such as this, museums "can be powerful identity-defining machines. To control a museum means precisely to control the representation of a community and some of its highest, most authoritative truths. It also means power to define and rank people, to declare some as having a greater share than others in the community's common heritage—in its very identity" (Duncan qtd. in Lisus and Ericson 205). The exhibition puts Jewish history on the public agenda, enfranchises Jewish identity, and writes the rejection of anti-Semitism into collective consciousness. In this way the exhibition informs public discourse, and signals by omission what is insignificant.

This is not merely a fleeting intervention. Shelley Hornstein argues that an exhibition is cemented into history through the institution's publications (whereas art outside of the museum is not) and the museum fortifies a canon that "reflects national, sage, and objectified valuations" (Hornstein 229). The AGO takes on national signification, especially through its construction of the past (World War II in this instance) and the heritage of its citizens, through the representation of work in a historical context. This understanding of the art museums's influence on historical consciousness is also reflected in Michel de Certeau's text on historiography and nation building. He identifies "a UNESCO report [which] notes in passing, that 'knowledge of the past is structural' to the extent that it plays a unifying role in each nation's ways of thinking" (de Certeau 137). Teitelbaum seems to be aware of this nation building role too when he tells the audio guide audience that "Charlotte Salomon's autobiographical

fiction *Life? or Theatre?* is a magnum opus which bears witness to her life and times—a historical moment whose effects must never be forgotten for, as the saying goes, those who forget history may be doomed to repeat it" (AGO *Press Script* 2). This may be why *Life? or Theatre?* is presented primarily as a document of the Holocaust and at the same time as a representation of "universal" truth; the exhibition is a historical document with implications for Canadian national identity.

It must therefore be consistent with existing state politics, in which ethnic diversity supercedes problems of gender and class. Note that the Ministry of Heritage remains focused on "cultural, ethnic and linguistic" diversity (Canadian Heritage, "Canada's"). Its Museum Assistance Program objectives also emphasize ethnic diversity (Canadian Heritage, "Museum"). Similarly, the Canada Council Equity Office Mandate identifies a focus on "racial" diversity, Aboriginal culture, and minority language communities. Also see its policy entitled "Cultural Diversity: The Cornerstone of Canadian Society" which states "as outlined in its Corporate Plan, the Council's goals are to expand existing audiences, create new audiences and foster public enjoyment of the arts. To help meet these goals, the Council has identified the culturally diverse community as a strategic funding priority, along with the youth community and the Aboriginal community". The Ontario Art Council's 2008-2013 strategic plan stresses similar concerns. Gender equality does not figure within these guiding documents, despite decades of feminist struggle.

Ethnic diversity is an issue of central importance to Canada's social and

economic condition, but it is also an issue that can be defused, or used to reinforce the status quo. The AGO exhibition demonstrates how the discourse of multiculturalism can be used to promote a complacent nationalism and quell social unrest by creating the illusion of social justice. It presented a facade of radicalism, as I show in my analysis below, while maintaining a controlled and uncritical environment for public engagement. Observe how the exhibition's rhetoric, while claiming universality, paradoxically manipulated the private character of the work to enhance its appeal by stressing that the work is Salomon's "whole life", depicts her personal trauma, was hidden, would have been destroyed by fascism, and having survived, having subverted such obstacles, has just been unearthed for you the public. This suggests that there is something subversive about the work, but its subversive potential is also highly personal and historically contingent, rather than actually relating to present day social conditions. The audio guide further fosters the spectators' impression that they are entering a secret, private world by atomizing them into individual listeners. The text's enactment by actress Tilda Swinton likewise contributes to this sense of intimacy; it seems to bring Salomon to life, as though you can hear her reading her narrative and performing her characters for you.[51] So while the exhibition, through the printed word, the audio guide commentary, the family photographs, the screening room, and the

[51]While the enactment is a fair response to Salomon's attempt to create a theatrical performance, the actress's British accent, in tandem with repeated reference to Rosenthal's full professional title ("Secretary of the Royal Academy in London") insinuates that the legitimation of the artwork as high art is found in its British institutional sanction rather than in the content and quality of the work itself.

placement and selection of gouaches, constructed a politically charged setting that emphasized the broad social significance of anti-Semitism, any kind of political response, and any feeling of being controlled by the institution, was counterbalanced, contained or dispelled by the spectator's illusion of access, interpersonal contact, and individualism.

An environment of open dialogue, free of coercion, is exactly what Teitelbaum encourages in his audio guide introductory statements:

> Bringing this important work here, to share with Toronto audiences, is very important to us. It provides an opportunity to discuss the ways in which art is central to personal experience, politics and history because, above all else, the Art Gallery of Ontario is a place of discovery and debate, a place of intense experiences. We want the Art Gallery of Ontario to be a place where you see the world anew. (AGO *Press Script* 2)

Here, Salomon's art is declaimed as an exemplar of innovative, social engagement. It becomes a forum for AGO self-promotion because the gallery labels it an emblem of its own intellectual agape. Teitelbaum further emphasizes this attitude in the *Member's Journal* announcing the exhibition. He writes,

> It is not that we want to turn all values upside down and stretch the meaning of the visual arts beyond reasonableness, but we do want to challenge a few long held ideas, and make the experience of museum-going refreshing and new... In each case our purpose is to invigorate the experience of looking by encouraging

direct enquiry. (Teitelbaum, *Member's Journal* 18)

Yet a glance through the catalogue (which reproduces more of the original work than exhibited) reveals that the exhibition's current state does not admit significant aspects of the direct enquiry present in *Life? or Theatre?*, since the exhibition obscures the presence of an overtly feminist critique in the work. Teitelbaum's rhetoric distracts us from that omission. It leads us to believe that we are really engaging with the work's controversial material, while we overlook its intersectional politics.

The AGO may have done this because it was concerned with creating a safe and accessible environment. Buekle speaks to the necessity for institutions to shield visitors from vicarious trauma in the experience of Salomon's work (noting that this can have a distortion effect on the work itself). The AGO is also attune to the visitor's experience since, when in 1996 it hosted the *Art of a Nation* exhibit of the *Group of Seven* alongside an interactive workshop on Canadian art and identity, researchers found that gallery goers "visited for comfort, not contest" (Lisus and Ericson 214). The design of the *Life? or Theatre?* exhibition assured those same conditions. The audience was instructed to use the work as a therapeutic approach to genocide; we could partake in its surviving beauty and apparent innocence, while learning something (if relatively little) about the Holocaust. The gallery could claim to stimulate public debate (on a morally unquestionable issue) to be controversial (regarding a subject that had already achieved widespread consensus), to be relevant to the contemporary (while historicizing and resigning to the past fascism, anti-Semitism, sexism), and to be open to a plethora of

public interpretations (while constructing a specific reception). Any gallery hosting this exhibition could claim to serve the public purpose of providing memorials against fascism, nourishing a compassionate nation, while atomizing audience members and diverting their attention to diffuse anger, thereby serving a nation-building role (i.e. Canada as tolerant, democratic, and intellectually curious) without causing any trouble. The exhibition was also likely to draw a large crowd given the widely, socially recognized relevance of the Holocaust, and the large Jewish community in Toronto. In other words, the exhibition had the edginess of the political without the controversy (or substance) that a feminist reading might proffer.

This perspective contradicts the presumed objectivity of cultural institutions. There is no doubt that these organizations are composed of ethical and critically minded individuals. Nonetheless, institutional and curatorial bias as a result of personality, politics and policy is well-documented. As Richard Sandell writes

> the inevitably political role of museums in privileging certain forms of knowledge has, of course, been widely discussed (Karp and Lavine 1995, Macdonald 1998, Hooper-Greenhilll 2000, Luke 2002). As Timothy Luke states, 'while their public pose most frequently is one of cool detached objectivity, museums are unavoidable enterprises organized around engaged partisan principles' (2002: 228). All museums embody sets of values which communicate a particular vision of society but this tendentiousness is very often denied by exhibition makers, both explicitly and implicitly, and rarely openly

acknowledged to visitors. (Sandell 177)

This problem of partisan politics in the museum results not merely from human fallacy. It relates to government mandates and the economic climate in which museums operate. Museums are dependent on these more than the social movements they may engage with from time to time. As T.V. Reed explains, feminist cultural impacts in particular go unrecognized in the museum because "most institutions, whether political or cultural, are invested in their own stability, while movements [such as feminism] thrive on engendering instability" (Reed 313). This is demonstrated by the manner in which the AGO mounted the exhibition and is evidence of the impact of the institutional framework on the erasure of certain ideas.

Peter Bürger's analysis of art as institution suggests that this is a necessary consequence of capitalism. He argues that the separation of art and life, which, is the result of the capitalist division of labour, creates "specialists" and in turn a "shrinking of experience" in art that "can no longer be translated into the praxis of life" because it is only "partial" (33). Art loses its social function because this separation of art and life under capitalism "neutralizes the political content of individual work" and the work comes to be "perceived as a 'mere' art product" (90). Avant-garde efforts to overcome this separation have failed and sometimes resulted in the creation of "false sublation....whose primary aim is to impose a particular kind of consumer behaviour [or social function] on the reader" (54). This turns "an instrument of emancipation" into "one of subjection" (54) because it imposes on the work a kind of false

reconciliation, an attempt to dissolve art's relative autonomy that effaces its productive dialectical tensions. The problem of "false sublation" can be applied to the Salomon exhibition since the intersectional analysis of Salomon's work was replaced with a more narrow agenda concerning multiculturalism that was, as I will argue below, in-part prescribed by capitalism and the state, as a kind of false reconciliation of difference.

With reference to the state, it is important to acknowledge that the AGO has been given a cultural diversity mandate. It has not been given an intersectional, feminist politics mandate. The AGO is compelled to produce particular kinds of cultural memory because it is affected by the federal government's 1990 Museums Act which mandates it to "'preserv[e] and promot[e] the heritage of Canada and all its peoples throughout Canada and abroad, and [to] contribut[e] to the collective memory and sense of identity of all Canadians'" (Whitelaw 126). The "collective memory" being constructed in this exhibit privileges Jewish history over women's history. I am suggesting that because of public policy, Salomon's ethnicity was more relevant to a multicultural, Canadian identity than her gender ever could be. Moreover, the exhibit's uncontroversial politics, its admonishment of anti-Semitism, suits the popular political identity of Canada as a compassionate but not radical nation, concerned about genocide outside of its borders and sensitive to the lessons of history, albeit less able to address internal or domestic power struggles. This goes some distance to explain why the AGO represented the work in such a one-dimensional fashion.

I would not argue that the AGO entirely excludes the more contested and unpopular terrain of feminism from its cultural memory making since some of its exhibitions have placed some focus on this issue. Moreover, since its reopening in 2008, the AGO has maintained a standing exhibition of feminist art. I also do not wish to claim that debates and fissures regarding curatorial policy have never existed within the AGO. Institutions are not monocultural, and they are indeed shaped by struggles over cultural memory. Given this condition, it is worth noting that the AGO operates within a charged, political environment in which to challenge discourse surrounding the Holocaust readily exposes one to accusations of anti-Semitism. For instance, note how Jenny Peto's University of Toronto Masters thesis, which is critical of Holocaust education, was condemned in the National Post and Ontario legislature in 2010. Still it is worth reflecting on why the AGO did not pursue a more nuanced and layered representation of Salomon's work a decade ago, why it added the screening room, and why it pursued a marketing and educational angle focused so unilaterally on the work in relation to the Holocaust. Again, I am interested in the AGO's decisions in this regard more than in the Royal Academy's precisely because the AGO did not initiate the exhibit. It is the choice the AGO made at a critical distance to reproduce the exhibit and, moreover, to add its own framing devices, which is of interest to me here, especially as it relates to my own cultural policy context. That being said, the policy context in all of the countries in which the exhibition appeared are not radically different from one another. I am proposing that the AGO may have been inclined to

emphasize the artist's ethnicity and to deemphasize her feminism at least in-part because of the political climate in which it was operating and specifically the pressure it was under as a result of government mandates toward multiculturalism. This interpretation is suggested by the fact that the gallery's ongoing struggle to secure adequate funding was explicitly related to the ethnic demographics of its audience. According to Pamela Young,

> During the summer [of 1992], the Ontario government refused the AGO's request for additional funding of $6 million. The institution then extended a three-month closure required for the renovations to seven months and laid off 244 of its 445 employees (it has since rehired 50).... [and] Haslam [the NDP Culture and Communications Minister] commissioned a task force... to examine the structure and policies of the AGO. Its report, released last November [1993], states that the gallery's financial management was "basically sound," but that it must reduce its dependence on government funding. Haslam also asked the task force to consider whether the AGO was meeting the needs of Canada's most ethnically diverse province. The report concluded: "The most important and difficult problem facing the AGO is...how to broaden its audience." (Young 56)

The institution was under pressure to increase contributions from private and corporate donors, through some kind of ethnically centred programming. Likewise, "museums of all kinds, and in many parts of the world, are increasingly expected to develop their

displays in ways that reflect the diverse, culturally pluralist societies within which they are operating" (Sandell x).[52] Championing Holocaust art helped the AGO appear to be more ethnically sensitive in the representation of a diverse Canada.

Moreover, as government funding has declined, the AGO has had to strengthen its partnership with the corporate world, whose interests also lie in multiculturalism as a means of market expansion. Satya A. Mohanty argues that the corporate establishment makes use of a discourse of diversity, turning antiracist sentiment into an opportunity for profit by emphasizing a concern for conservative and symbolic cultural pluralism over radical and experiential racial equality. The rhetoric of multiculturalism ends in "depoliticizing race and substituting (a narrowly defined) 'culture' for antiracist consciousness" (Mohanty 17), thereby further disempowering those parties the corporations claim to support. This analysis, which resonates with Bürger's concern about false sublation, highlights the fact that the exhibition's focus on Salomon's ethnicity emphasized a concern for symbolic cultural pluralism over a more radical racial equality that would have represented Salomon's work in a more comprehensive manner.

In summary, I contend that with regard to the exhibition the widely sanctioned moral imperative found in the Holocaust has the effect of propagating a national discourse that conveys a multicultural, politically open, Canadian identity, while in actuality constructing a controlled public sphere in which political opposition is not at

[52] This trend is also documented, as Sandell notes, in Tony Bennett.

stake, and a tenable market is assured, thereby gratifying the institutional funding mandates imposed by governmentality and the corporate sphere. While the AGO provides a case study for considering the impact of policy on museum practice in a capitalist context, similar socio-economic conditions pertain to cultural institutions throughout the world, given the global expansion of capitalism.

This problem of depoliticization was recently observed again at the AGO's Massive Uprising fundraising party in 2009, which employed civil dissent as a party theme. The event led Aaron Cain to conclude that "the popular culture machine is eating up progressive elements to transform them into bland, dislocated simulacra" (Cain 19). It is not insignificant that this event was specifically concerned with the institution's fiscal reality, appealing to art's political engagement for the sake of revenue, and thereby reassigning the political dimension of art to propping up the socioeconomic conditions of capitalism.

If the economic context seems an unlikely explanation for the way in which the feminist aspects of Salomon's work have been downplayed, we should reconsider the state of feminism within the artworld at large, where we can perceive the intersection of symbolic and economic power with its effects for women. While I have just made the case that there was a systemic bias in favour of an ethnic presentation of Salomon's work, at the expense of its other dimensions, I will now argue that there was also an implicit, systemic bias against a feminist interpretation.

We know that economic organization is a significant determinant of any

gender's access to power, and that one manifestation of power is found in the symbolic capital of cultural institutions. This is why social inequalities become reproduced in the museum and are reproduced by it. Nochlin highlights the continuum between sexism in society at-large and in the cultural field when she writes that

> Assumptions about women's weakness and passivity; her sexual availability for men's needs; her defining domestic and nurturing function; her identity with the realm of nature; her existence as object rather than creator of art; the patent ridiculousness of her attempts to insert herself actively into the realm of history by means of work or engagement in political struggle—all of these notions, themselves premised on an even more general, more all-pervasive certainty about gender difference itself—all of these notions were shared, if not uncontestedly, to a greater or lesser degree by most people of our period [i.e. the 20th century], and as such constitute an ongoing subtext underlying almost all individual images involving women. (Nochlin 2)

Here Nochlin posits that pervasive and deeply entrenched attitudes about gender materially constrain women in the public sphere and are manifest in cultural production. This creates an ideological circuit that is difficult to breach. Museum practice is understandably implicated in this circuit because museums are part of the public sphere and the practice of cultural production.

Cultural policy circumscribing the museum has also been implicated; it is resigned to a low echelon of value because of its association with women. Alison Beale

and Annette Van den Bosch have found that "the arts as 'feminine', irrational, spiritual, and, in the romantic tradition, as the antithesis of economic values (all of which makes their public-sector support portrayable as economic and moral dependency), is an image that has persisted throughout the recent period in which the arts in Canada and Australia have been required to model themselves as cultural industries" (Beale & Van den Bosch 247). For one example, Beale and Van den Bosch point to the Chair of the Canada Council's remarks at the 1995 Governor General's literary awards, in which she advertised "the Council's availability as matchmaker" between private sector art patrons and artists (Beale & Bosch 246). Such a feminine casting of artistic production as dependent on the masculine patron of public/private funding, has prepared the ground for the problematic representation of women in exhibition by perpetuating myths of women as weak and needy objects of desire rather than autonomous, creative and important.

This problem is compounded by government cutbacks in favour of market economics that align women and the arts as low priorities. Beale and Van den Bosch observe that

> In Ontario especially, such amputations of public policies and institutions have been made tyrannically by cabinet fiat at lightning speed with no consultation or public debate.... Some 13 feminist groups, signatories of the Ontario *Women*'s Declaration on December 6, 1995, demanded that the new government 'cease its policies of discriminatory cutbacks' so that the "hard-won legal, economic,

> social and political gains women have achieved" could be maintained. They also protested against the "deep cuts for funding for the arts and culture," stressing a connection between women and the arts in this social realignment. (Beale & Van den Bosch 44)

Activists recognize an antagonism in public policy toward any social concern (e.g. cultural production, gender equality, environmental sustainability) that cannot be met with a market solution. A shift in policy toward market economics divorced from social relations[53] has precipitated this problem. The marketability of women's art has been at issue because policy has looked toward the propagation of the cultural industries as an economic and imperialist engine. Hence, "Other forms of cultural production, such as craft, the fine and performing arts and community arts, are construed as part of the feminine welfare state sector, as opposed to the export earning, technologised world of the masculine 'bottom line' " (Beale & Van den Bosch 2). Domestically, galleries have also been impacted by this turn toward international capitalism since "increased corporate sponsorship of major museums and the social functions associated with this funding has established a private audience for corporate sponsored functions in public institutions, and has resulted in an over-emphasis on the blockbuster exhibition. This emphasis too, is unlikely to reflect women's culture" (Beale & Van den Bosch 15).

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[53] For evidence of this policy movement see McMurtry 2004. Polyani can be credited with describing the socially disembedded character of economics precipitated by capitalism.

Given the pervasive quality of patriarchy and capitalism, (and the patriarchal character of capitalism)[54], it is unsurprising that not only images, but also their custodians are significantly determined by gender dynamics. Carol Becker has noticed

> the parallel between the psychodynamics of institutions and those of traditional nuclear and extended families. The typical institutional configuration is all too familiar. At the top a patriarch serves as figurehead and final arbitrator, possessing the bulk of the decision-making power—the father. Often second in command is a woman who works closely with him as advisor, confidant, mediator, interceptor—the mother. And several other males and females assist him in his leadership and relate to the hierarchy of the institution as they did to their parents, and to their peers as if they were siblings. These, of course, are the children. (Becker 249)

Becker's study demonstrates that the gender politics of our economy not only surround, but also insert themselves into, our cultural organizations. Arts administrators both respond to these conditions in their external environment, and enact them internally.

This may be why, despite decades of feminist criticism, cultural policy has proved itself nearly impenetrable to the feminist movement. Beale & Bosch demonstrated this in their exhaustive study of Canadian and Australian cultural policy of the early 90s. They found that,

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[54] The externalities of capitalism disproportionally affect women as producers of workers, as household consumers, and as a predominantly landless and low waged second class.

> both mainstream liberal and neo-marxist cultural policy analysis in Australia and Canada showed remarkably little feminist influence. It was dominated by agendas of national cultural preservation, or by questioning these agendas, and by managing changes in technologies and in cultural markets. To a lesser extent it was concerned with multiculturalism, racism, aboriginal peoples, and community arts. (Beale & Van den Bosch 2)

So heritage, market priorities and the management of ethnic difference are identified as the three areas of attention, and presumably each one is approached primarily from the perspective of the other two. This condition encourages a market approach to Canadian diversity because if market priorities are always part of the approach then market solutions are likely to be sought in all cases. Such an approach would not encourage investment in the representation of other forms of difference.

By 2005 the ongoing effects of such a policy environment were evident at the epicenter of modern art:

> In a 2005 follow-up review of the new Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York, published one year after its massive expansion and reopening, the art critic Jerry Saltz of the Village Voice suggested that the public boycott the institution until its "arrogantly parochial misrepresentation" of women artists was corrected and those responsible were "held accountable." "Of the approximately 410 works in the fourth and fifth-floor galleries," he reported, only a paltry 16 are by women. (Nochlin & Reilly 19)

Even as late as 2005, even within this bastion of the avant-garde, there has been a failure to embrace an intersectional feminist politics.

While critics have long recognized such problems resulting from the marketization of art and the turn toward globalization, most tend to ignore the specifics of capitalism as an economic system. When capitalism is mentioned by cultural critics, it typically remains undefined and the implication is that capitalism represents all forms of market economics, which renders it unavoidable, with only one alternative located in the totalitarian state.[55] Capitalism is the private and exclusionary ownership of the means of production for profit. We should ask what kind of cultural memory such a system can enable. Horkheimer and Adorno have famously argued that the effect of capitalist industrial processes on cultural production is a commodification that encourages sameness, and coerces audience members to participate in their own objectification under the guise of entertainment pleasure, overriding any quality of individuality. More recently in Klein's study of disaster zones, we discover that the Chicago School's extreme strain of capitalism demands the erasure of culturally specific memory altogether. Such a system, it seems, is not conducive to feminist cultural memory.

The dialectic of individual and collective life, of which feminist cultural memory is a product, enables life itself. The culture of privatization endemic to capitalism

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[55] Cooperative cultural producers demonstrate otherwise and this is an area deserving of further study.

contradicts this dialectic. Cultural memory is a challenge to the singular focus of universalizing capitalism because it forges links between individuals and the collective; it also challenges the erasure of experience and difference against commodification's universal sameness.

Salomon's work exemplifies this potential by articulating intersectional frameworks of oppression and employing a dialectical approach to cultural memory, one that productively relates categories of difference such as fact and fiction, gender and ethnicity, self and other. So it is crucial to understand the work's exhibition context and how it mitigates the power of *Life? or Theatre?*. Ironically, the content of Salomon's work directly comments on how economic relations impact women's experience of power, just as economic relations impact the reception of her work.[56] For instance, the women in the text find themselves emancipated by professions outside the home and destroyed by dynamics internal to the patriarchal family. One principal cause of the suicidal impulse in *Life? or Theatre?* is posited to be the women's frustrated intellectual and creative labour. Women of independent economic means are seen to inspire the artist. Moreover, the affair central to *Life? or Theatre?* is marked by class difference. Salomon's leading man is explicitly conditioned by his economic position; he is a "prince...allowed to starve" (Salomon 341). More could be written about the

[56] I recognize that the close reading of the text which now follows could equally belong in chapter 4, but I have included it here because, while chapter 4 seeks to highlight the work's feminist dimension, I am speaking more explicitly in this chapter to demonstrate the critique of economic conditions that a socialist feminist theory brings to a reading of the exhibition, both its context and its content. This inclusion also brings full circle the analysis of chapter 4 and 5, by integrating analysis of the work, exhibition, and exhibition context.

class content of this work, as it intersects significantly with *Life? or Theatre?*'s other dimensions. It is essentially a critique of bourgeois relationships. But much of this cultural memory content concerning economic conditions has so far been curtailed by the economic contingencies surrounding it. Here we see how the work's cultural memory (described more comprehensively in chapter 4) correlates with its conditions of production.

More recent, feminist performance is constituted by critiques of economic conditions similar to Salomon's. They attempt to resist economies of reproduction and capitalist appropriation. But this is one of the difficulties in presenting Salomon's work as feminist—its limited, market value. This is another reason the work is subject to an analysis of class, at the intersection of gender and ethnicity. Ultimately it is not a question of whether the work's engagement with ethnicity, class or gender is more significant. It is about how these categories intersect internally and externally, how a limited focus on any one category poses a detriment to the others, and how an awareness of this intersection is curtailed by capitalism's influence on the context of cultural production. This is what a socialist feminist cultural memory framework addresses. Let us not hedge our tragedies against one another but recognize them where they flourish.

Conclusion

This project has engaged with a number of professional streams (aesthetic theory and criticism, cultural memory, intersectional feminist politics, museum studies and cultural policy) to illuminate their interconnection. It has drawn together rationales within aesthetic theory that understand aesthetic politics in terms of dialectics. It has brought the lens of cultural memory to those rationales to develop our understanding of art's political potential and its limitations—that it can be circumscribed by material and ideological conditions through the cultural memory it creates and reinforces—while simultaneously developing a dialectical definition of cultural memory. This project has also applied a feminist analysis of aesthetics to ground these rationales in a progressive politics, and it has mobilized feminist critique of the museum to reconsider a particular exhibition of a woman's work and its engagement with cultural memory. The project has reinforced a political economy critique of capitalism's impact on cultural policy by considering policy's implications for the exhibition. Finally, this work has employed a socialist feminist theory of art as cultural memory to suggest a more ethical basis for cultural policy, one that better reflects an understanding of art's social value as cultural memory to account for the diverse political implication of the arts and to challenge the hegemony of capitalism which constrains them.

I began by making the case in chapter 1 that the arts are intrinsic to social change because they are media of cultural memory. Culture is a reflection or

instantiation of cultural memory, which filters and maintains cultural content across time and space. As a tool of cultural memory, the arts embody this cultural content. Consequently the arts can enable the imagination of difference, the representation of action, and the fulfillment of phylogeny, all necessary precursors to social change. The arts also disseminate ideas, frame them and enable collectivizing around them. In so far as they relate to subjectivity, by integrating the heterogeneity of the subject so that the subject can act, the arts mobilize cultural memory to influence people at the conscious and unconscious level, where memory is stored and recalled. They therefore have a central role in the construction of individuals and how they relate.

In chapter 2 I argued that the definition of cultural memory could be usefully developed to shed light on this dynamic. If cultural memory is essentially the propagation of collective memory through cultural signs and manifesting in cultural signs, it is dialectical, not static, the terrain of ideological struggle, which links us to values, groups, and identities. But cultural memory requires representation to realize itself, to reflect and integrate experience, which facilitates learning. Such representation also enables us to recollect and be guided by transcendent values. Furthermore, it constructs experiential knowledge, which is necessary to the development of empathy and action. In total, representation as cultural memory relates us to the metaphysical and the political; this range helps us to understand varied interpretations of aesthetic value. Art and cultural memory struggle and transform through one another as they negotiate between the material and spiritual, past and

present, the sensuous and rational, text and context, author and reader, affirmation and negation. This is a useful means of defining the function of art, which places it at the centre of life struggles.

Such an aesthetic theory of art as cultural memory cannot avoid political content. In chapter 3 I made the argument that feminism and socialism together create an ideal mode of intersectional politics relevant to aesthetics, grounded in an analysis of structure and agency. This mode reveals the correlation of women and art under capitalism. I have argued that feminist art and theory inform one another, especially through the principle that the personal is political, which takes on various manifestations worthy of attention, and merges the arts with everyday life. I have further demonstrated an alignment between feminism and cultural memory making that reveals the capacity of cultural memory to relate the personal and political. Art materializes social change to some degree by intervening in the discourse of gender, translating past, personal experience into present politics. This intervention of cultural memory bridges discourse and material reality through its aesthetic and sensory dimensions. Memory is drawn from the material world and is experienced physically. It also draws on emotional worlds that are extra-discursive and materialize in the body. Art likewise relies on the transaction of sensation, which provokes a relational and conceptual engagement with the matter presented that renders it social and political. This explains the transformative impact of discourse on reality and vice versa, without conflating the two, which leaves cultural memory distinct from discourse and praxis.

Understanding of these distinctions is itself a struggle of cultural memory and is necessary to feminist politics, which depend on the remembrance of the lived experienced of oppression. The distinction between memory and discourse is necessary if feminism is to critique capitalism as both discourse and material reality, a critique that is obscured by the dominance of discourse theory, which helps capitalism to erase memory.

Art reinstates the progressive political potential of cultural memory, not as nostalgia or affect, upon which capital increasingly seeks to operate, but as a return of the repressed. Capital may mobilize affect and suppress memory or rewrite memory through affect; it can even mobilize cultural memory to its own ends, but the arts continue to facilitate the resurgence of counter memory.

In chapter 4 I have demonstrated the cultural memory value of *Life? or Theatre?* as a multidisciplinary work of art that embodies my five part definition of cultural memory and demonstrates its politics. The work transforms Salomon's experience into a memory that enables catharsis and education in tandem with estrangement. It productively reintegrates various sources of psychological angst and disruption, and engages art in everyday life to make and remake memory—to move from Thanatos to Eros. Consequently, it is a work of feminist cultural memory that demonstrates how cultural memory can stimulate empathy in the service of politics. I have elucidated the feminist dimension of the work in particular, evident in many of its themes, motifs, and characters as well as in its aesthetic strategies, which together inspire a critical

awareness within the audience concerning the cultural construction of intersectional identities and experiences. Such identities and experiences are mobilized to foster a relational and empathic reading of the work, and thereby extend its intersectional politics.

I have demonstrated that one exhibition of Salomon's work has restricted its cultural memory potential by focusing almost exclusively on the ethnic dimension of *Life? or Theatre?*, and I have explored how this framing of the work has been challenged or affirmed by critics. I have specifically highlighted a feminist reading that is often overlooked, to complicate our interpretation of *Life? or Theatre?*. I have also made the argument that the work's complexity has been compromised by a historiographic metanarrative that problematically universalizes its import. This move counters the work's feminist commentary and intersectional politics by negating difference, and it demonstrates the potential for cultural memory to be manipulated.

I attempted in chapter 5 to review the role of cultural institutions in cultivating cultural memory and I established the necessity that they be guided by an intersectional politics in doing so. I have argued that a failure in this regard perpetuates the logic of oppression and that the stakes are high given the investment of cultural institutions in national discourse. This investment has created pressure points for cultural institutions, pushing toward a complacent politics and the management of dissent. I have drawn on others to make the case that institutions are subject to such political pressures, which influence exhibition practices, underlined by capitalism and patriarchy. As a

consequence, the status of women and the status of art are closely related just as capitalism and patriarchy are mutually embedded. Cultural memory is a tool to overcome this dynamic when it is grounded in a socialist feminist politics that challenges our alienation from life values and reasserts the dialectical principle.

I have undertaken this project because I believe that Canadians must develop and adopt a better way of understanding the social value of the arts, beyond our common and superficial assumptions about its positive and negative effects. We have assumed that the arts can be educational and spiritually uplifting, offensive, and even misleading. We have not developed a coherent and common understanding of their politics, of their central role in the construction of subjectivity, empathy, and social change. In the absence of such an understanding, which should be central to our civic life, we are left with the vague impression that the arts have the capacity to change our minds but little understanding of how, or in what direction, and even less hope that such change might translate into a more just and meaningful existence. Is it any wonder then that art becomes merely the terrain of entertainment at the service of industry, widely undervalued and misunderstood, and the mythic figure of the starving artist persists as a static reality? At best, the arts are regarded with equal measures of hope and cynicism, given the indeterminacy of any meaning they might offer. This is the limitation of discourse analysis, a limitation I have attempted to breach by creating a bridge into materialism using a concept of cultural memory that is situated within an intersectional feminist politics. The theory of cultural memory developed here enables us to better

understand how the experiences and ideas offered by the arts might actually contribute to the construction of reality. Furthermore, a cultural memory approach makes clear why it is necessary to attend as much to the material conditions of artistic production as to its ideological heritage. This has been addressed by the sociology of art, which considers the conditions of cultural production, but a cultural memory lens makes visible the manner in which cultural production transforms itself through memory and discourse.

The method of applying a socialist feminist theory of art as cultural memory to the experience of a work of art is to ask what is being remembered in the work, what is being forgotten, and what are the politics of that remembering or forgetting. Moreover, it asks these questions with an attention to the socially and economically constructed nature of a society (the work's context) and its intersectional power dynamics. Salomon's work has provided a relatively transparent case study for this method because it has an autobiographical and realist underpinning. The artist intended it to be a memory-based project. Through the theories, reflections and experiments of its characters the narrative itself articulates ideas about the imbrication of memory and art. Furthermore, the work has been valued and promoted largely because of its memorial dimension, as a document of Jewish, European history. I am not suggesting that the reading I have proposed is the only one possible; nor is it exclusive of other readings, but I have demonstrated what kind of reading might result from the application of a social feminist theory of art as cultural memory. It is my supposition that work

associated with other artistic disciplines could equally benefit from this method of analysis, but a longer work is required to demonstrate that through case studies. Perhaps other cultural critics and arts audiences will develop such an approach.

I hope to have made clear the origins of my approach to aesthetics in my review of aesthetic theory, the sociology of the arts, cultural memory, and the politics of socialist feminism. I have aimed to correlate these fields so that I could explicitly articulate a mode of understanding the arts with which others might easily identify, and thereby move toward improving the status of the arts in Canada through recognition of its role in social change. What I have overlooked is the possibility that this role is already well understood by some, and actually explains the sequestering of the arts because of the threat they pose to power. Indeed, it is the hegemony of capitalism that limits the effect of critical art and critical discourse about art. We must keep questioning assumptions about our cultural inheritance; we must keep answering the question, as I have here, why are the arts important and why are they problematic, or else critical discourse will be bypassed and hegemony enabled. This requires a socialist feminist aesthetic theory, which will not end capitalism but is a necessary precondition for its overcoming in the cultural sphere. A socialist feminist politics of art as cultural memory pushes representation into engagement with intersectionality and the economic conditions of cultural production and policy, with consequences for national political consciousness. Applying that lens to cultural policy at least facilitates some kind of democratic recourse around capitalism. Even more broadly, the concept of cultural

memory can help us to understand how the cultural sphere is used to mitigate and interpret challenging economic, social, environmental, and political conditions. It is the aesthetic and material grounding for survival and identity in the built, social and natural environments, of which it is both product and producer, and it is always informing the choices that communities make.

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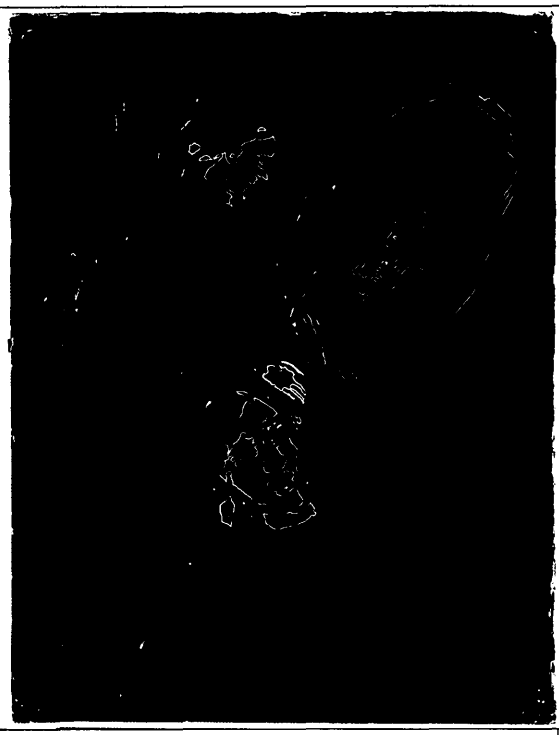
JHM no. 4182
Mrs. Knarre does not cry, but her eyes seem to penetrate the profoundest depths of the world. From the topmost tips of her hair down to the farthest joints of her small feet, her grief spreads throughout her body. It transcends her own suffering. It is the suffering of the world, the suffering of the fate that Mrs. Knarre, née Bend, has been elected to bear. MRS. KNARRE 'Now my little Franziska too.'

JHM no. 4225
A man like that demands that honourable women devote their entire time to him - and, she went on to think: Gone is the dream of the singer if I join my life to his; so, although deeply touched, she remained firmly resolved not to marry him. To the tune: 'Paulinkaa, I love you, oh will you be my wife?'

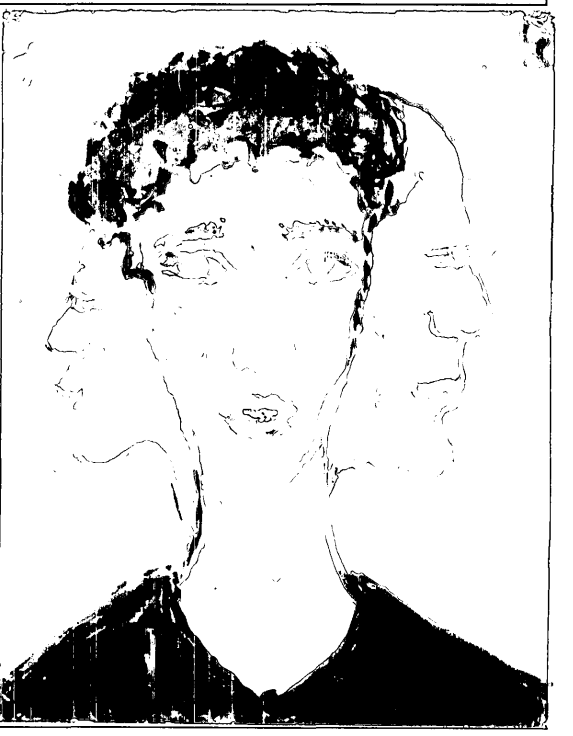


JHM no. 4233
And now the circle of her thoughts closes. At her parents' grave she begins to sing: ' Why should I avoid the pathways where the other signposts stand? Looking for those hidden archways through that snowbound rocky land? Ne'er a soul have I deceived that I should shun my fellow man. What mad command have I received that would me to the desert ban? There's a signpost in that hollow that I clearly now discern. There's a pathway I must follow, there's a pathway I must follow from which no mortal shall return. And mentally she adds: 'And now I must return to my duty, to this man with this child.'

JHM no. 4245
Paulinka was very touched by this mournful recital, and even more so when her husband mentioned that his parents-in-law secretly accused him of being to blame for his first wife's suicide. Suddenly it seemed quite clear to her that, if there was any question at all of blame, it was solely the mother-in-law and mother who was to blame - the person who had stifled every natural impulse in her children by bringing them up to be stiff and formal, who had imposed the example of her own perfection on them in such a way that, in the certainty of their own imperfection and, on the other hand, impelled by strong natural instincts, they found themselves in such violent inner conflicts that their only escape was through death. Paulinka cannot rid herself of the thought that one day young Charlotte, likewise confronted by these doubts, might also throw herself out the window.

JHM no. 4287
'And I will be Professor. Don't disturb, please don't disturb me. And I will be Professor. 'MRS. KNARRE 'Ah yes, even when quite small she was very cheeky, often annoying her mother.'

JHM no. 4288
Tune: 'And my husband loves me not. And my child, she needs me not. Why, oh why, am I alive? "So her thoughts ran in her mind.'

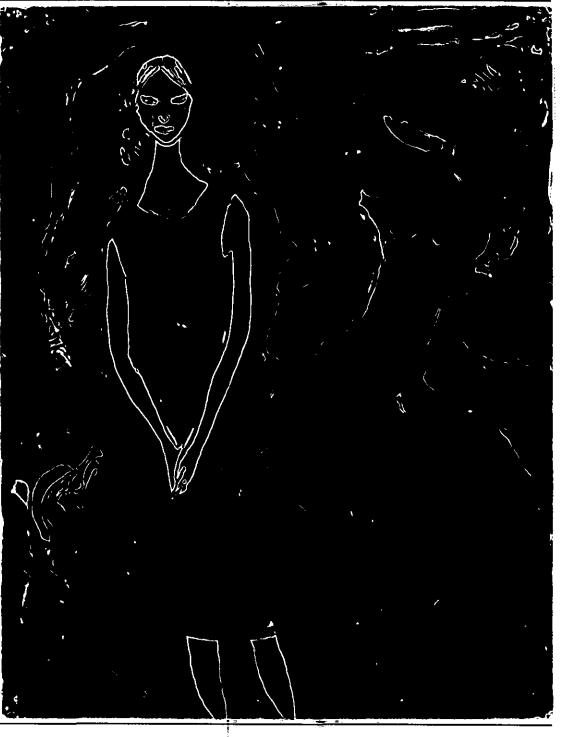


JHM no. 4293
'Then my sister and my brother's only daughter took their lives.'

JHM no. 4354
PROFESSOR 'Be ever true and constant too, until beneath the sod, and waver not a finger's breadth from ways marked out by God.'

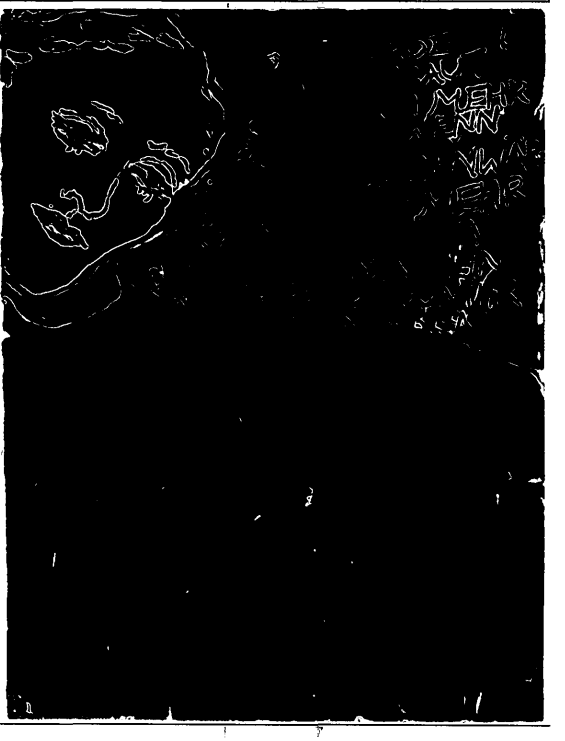
JHM no. 4357
STUDENTS AND PROFESSOR TOGETHER 'How beautiful our Barbara is!'

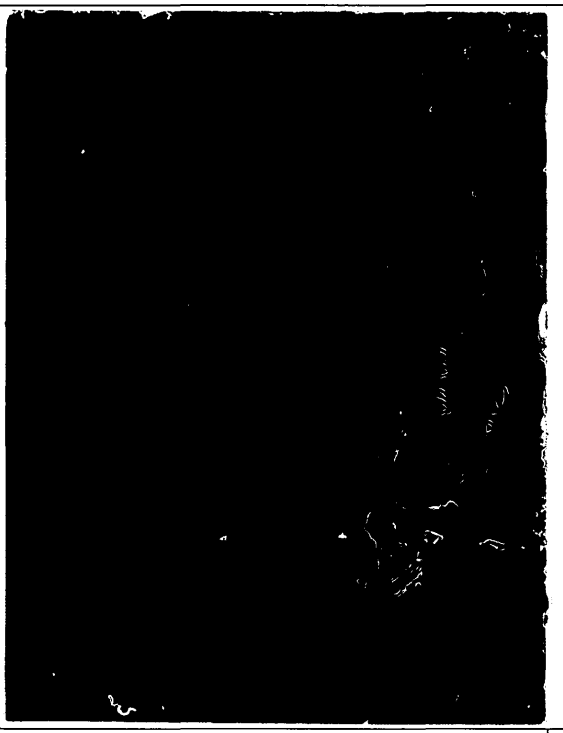
JHM no. 4362
Out there in the forest there goes-there lives many a prince or princess-in the forest, there let us hearken. Sleep gently, Sleeping Beauty, how sweet you look!'



JHM no. 4389
Here you see him standing, like many a woman, at the window-so full of dreams-so full of longing.

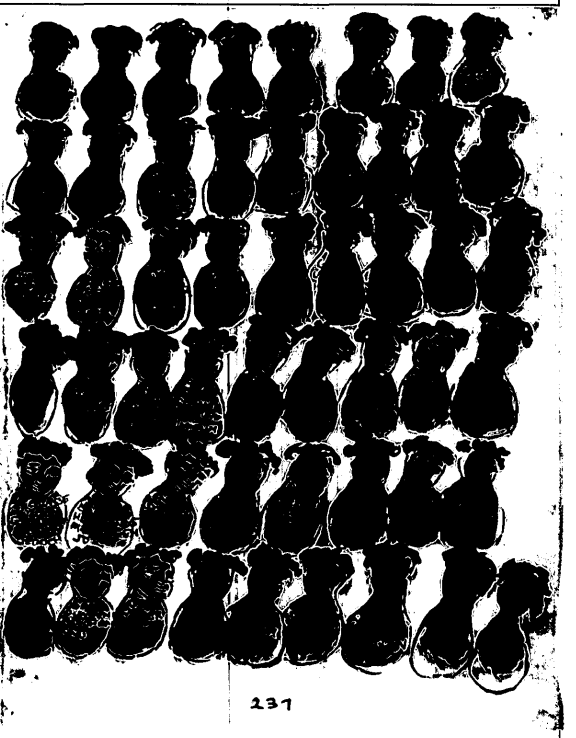
JHM no. 4472
'However, surely it would give your fiancée more pleasure if you were to devote more attention to her as she is now instead of staring at an ancient photograph of her.'

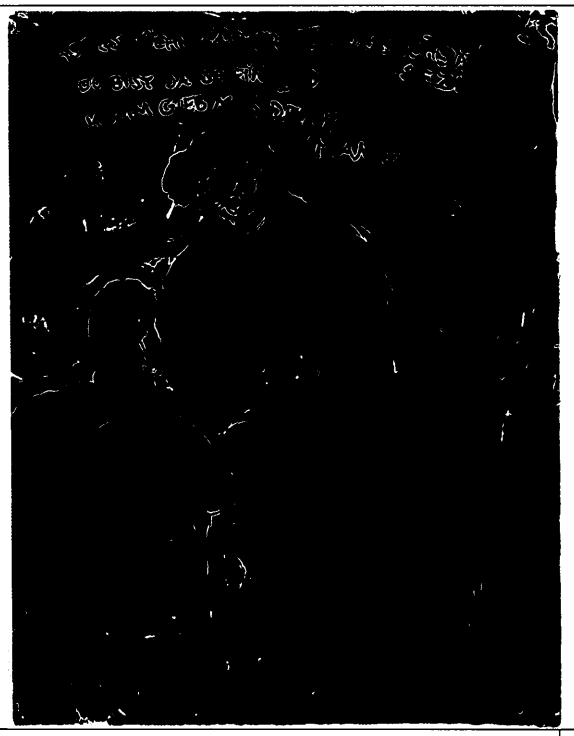




JHM no. 4502
After all his strenuous arguments, he would have expected a different reaction from Paulinka. DABERLOHN 'Let me shape you, let me form you. That's all I ask, all I ask.'

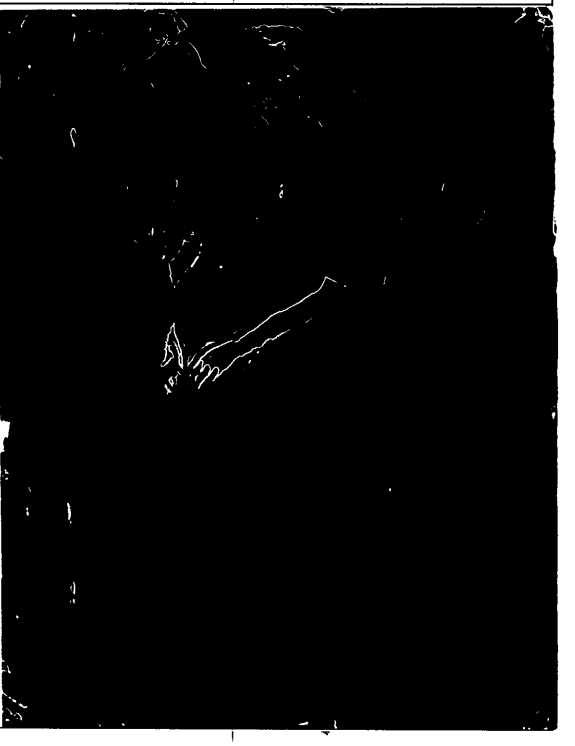
JHM no. 4609
'And again, when I saw these two pictures, I was reminded of the essay by that other young girl. She makes it very clear: when she is happy and begins to paint, bright colours and red and yellow dots flow from her brush, and when her mood is dark her colours turn dusky gray. And it should of course be noted that this applies regardless of the subject the artist has in mind. When, as in these two pictures, the spiritual mood at the moment of creation happens to coincide with the despair-filled theme, 'Death and the Maiden', the result, together with the optimistic 'Meadow with the Yellow Flowers', is- on a very minor scale of course-true art...My discovery of the similarity between what young girls produce and what certain geniuses produce is completely justified. Like young girls...'

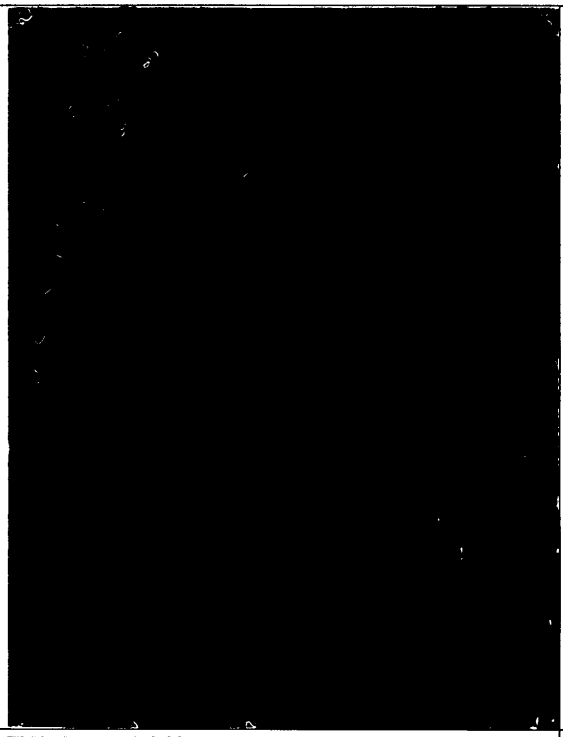




JHM no. 4641
'Isn't it a absurd to address each other so formally? You're such a baby-here, let me hold your hand.'

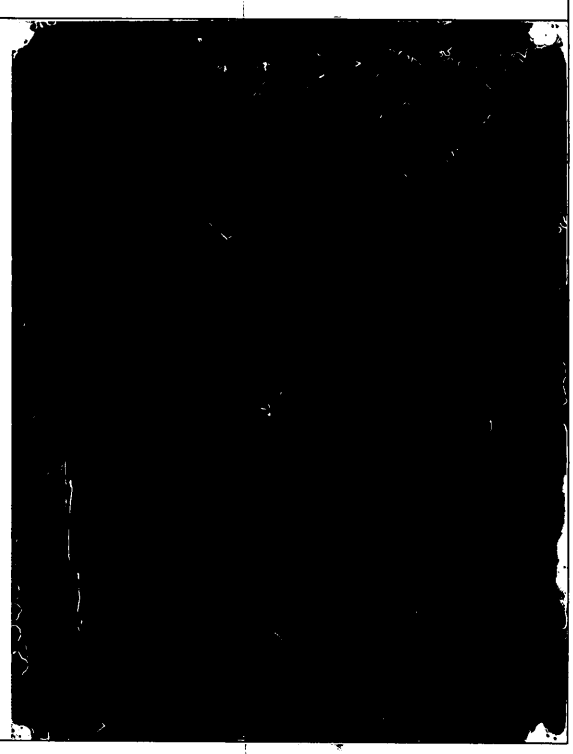
JHM no. 4642
'Real painter's hands.' CHARLOTTE 'To me they're just ugly.'

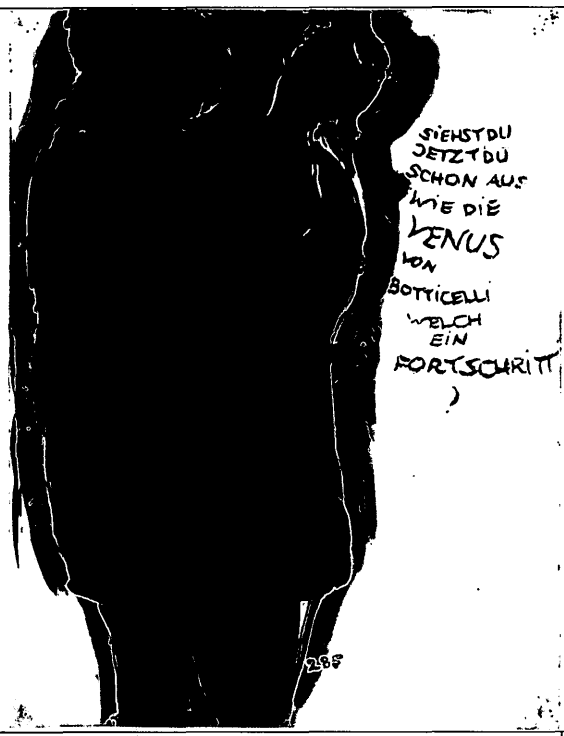




JHM no. 4654
CHARLOTTE 'Oh, please, stay - I don't want you to go!' DABERLOHN 'No, let go of me. I must leave now.'

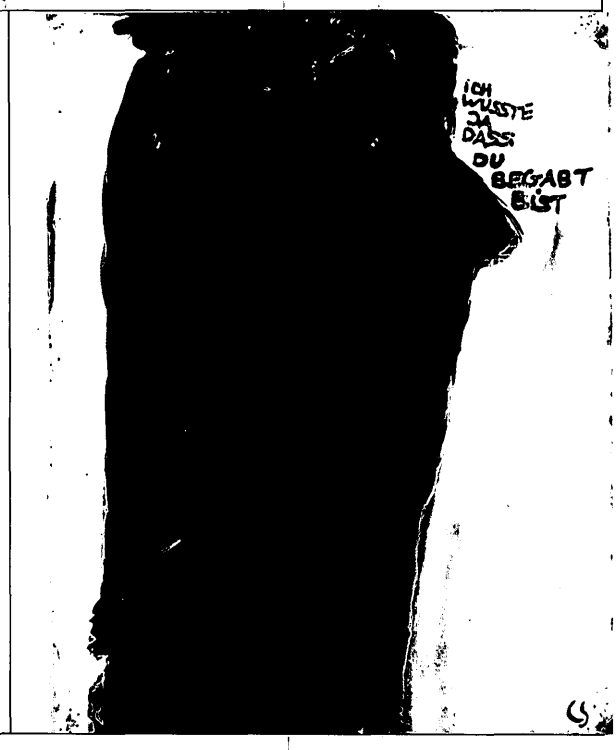
JHM no. 4662
CHARLOTTE 'Please let go of me, you disgust me.' DABERLOHN 'Yes, my dear, that's something you'll have to get used to.'





JHM no. 4663
DABERLOHN 'See? You already look like Botticelli's Venus! What progress!'

JHM no. 4664
DABERLOHN 'I knew you were gifted.'

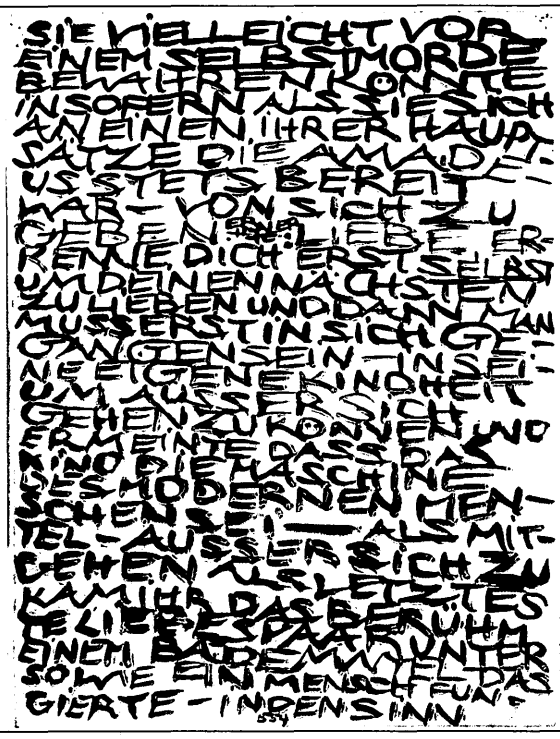


JHM no. 4840
'Young girls of a certain age need men.' CHARLOTTE 'I've never yet been interested in men, and I ask you once and for all to spare me that topic.'

JHM no. 4915v
GRANDFATHER 'I don't understand you. What's wrong with sharing a bed with me—when there's nothing else available? I'm in favour of what' natural.' CHARLOTTE 'Don't torment me. You know that I know exactly what I have to do.'

JHM no. 4918v
CHARLOTTE 'What's the racket?'
GERMAN REFUGEE 'Quiet, ssh, You're Sainte Marie!'
CHARLOTTE 'Get out of here!'

JHM no. 4920v
CHARLOTTE 'You know, Grandpa, I have a feeling the whole world has to be put together again.'
GRANDFATHER 'Oh, go ahead and kill yourself and put an end to all this babble!'


SIE VIELLEICHT VOR
EINEM SELBSTMORDE
BEWAHREN KONNTE
INSOFERN ALS SIE SICH
AN EINEN IHRER HAUPT-
SÄTZE DIE AMADEU-
US STETS BEREIT
WAR - VON SICH ZU
GEBEN: LIEBE ER-
KENNE DICH ERST SELBST
UM DEINEN NÄCHSTEN
ZU LIEBEN UND DANN MAN
MUSS ERST IN SICH GE-
GANGEN SEIN INSEI-
NE EIGENE KINDHEIT
UM AUSSER SICH
GEHEN ZU KÖNNEN UND
ER MEINTE DASS DAS
KINO DIE MASCHINE
DES MODERNEN MEN-
SCHEN SEI - ALS MIT-
TEL - AUSSER SICH ZU
GEHEN ALS LETZTES
KAM IHR DAS BERÜHM
TE LIEBESPAAR UNTER
EINEM BADEMANTEL DAS
SOWIE EIN MENSCH FUN-
GIERTE - IN DEN SINN

JHM no. 4923r

...might possibly preserve her from suicide inasmuch as she remembered one of Amadeus's favorite utterances: Love, know thyself first in order to love thy neighbour. And then: one has to go into oneself-into one's childhood-to be able to go out of oneself. And he felt that the movie was the machine of modern man as a means of going out of oneself. And finally she recalled the famous couple embracing under a bathrobe, functioning as one person